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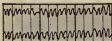
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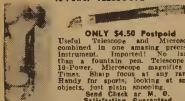
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**STORIES**

**Volume 9**

**SEPTEMBER, 1958**

**Number 3**

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## REFINEMENT

WE WERE talking about Martin Gardner's *"Fads & Fallacies"* the other day, and the discourse meandered from subject to subject—as talk will when you're not even trying to stick to a particular point. And we found ourselves discussing multi-valued logic, as opposed to the "Aristotelian" two-valued logic which was the basis of so much argument amongst science-fictionists some years ago.

"There's nothing wrong with the proposition 'X is either true or not true', and you can apply

it very usefully once you have all the necessary refinements worked out," said my visitor.

I agreed, adding that everything depends upon the nature of the refinements and upon common agreement among men—and between men and the universe—as to when the necessary has been accomplished in each instance.

It usually happens, when you start talking about two-valued logic, that someone says, "Oh—you mean that everything's either black or white,

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=====

Novelet

=====

# the destroyers

by Theodore L. Thomas

illustrated  
by  
FRÉAS

Mackay Hayes was no coward, but the manner in which he had seen his parents slain when he was a boy had left permanent scars. He couldn't endure the thought of killing anything. But Hayes was also a mathematical genius, the one man who could perform the intricate lightning calculations necessary to operate a heat suit. And only a man in a heat suit could survive long enough to get to the weapon of the destroyers from the stars.

**M**ACKAY HAYES was one of those quiet fellows who never argued with anyone. His mother and father had been like that, too—quiet people with warm smiles, and an aura of calmness

that reached out and enfolded you. They should have lived long, Mackay's mother and father; they should have lived long, and seen their work grow and spread and become a living monument to human charity



The violet beam sliced the entire house in half, catching Mary Mitchell...

and goodness. But the lives of medical missionaries are uncertain at best.

No one knows what started it; the headwaters of the Amazon are uncertain regions to this very day. Perhaps some unseen taboo was violated, perhaps some petty chieftain grew jealous. Without warning, the Indians turned on Henry Hayes and his wife Martha. The Indians seized them and suspended them by the feet from the branch of a great tree. From high noon until high noon the Indians did indescribable things to the good man and his wife, while the nine-year-old Mackay Hayes was forced to watch. For twenty-four hours the boy watched his mother and father being killed; they died well.

Unaccountably, the Indians took the boy out of the deep jungle and left him at an outpost; from there he was taken back to civilization, and to a new home. His mother's brother and his wife raised him as their own; Charles and Mary Mitchell took their nephew in and brought him up.

The Mitchells were good folk. Charles Mitchell was a

Professor of Mechanical Engineering at a little college in Western Pennsylvania. Students came to him as often for advice on family problems as they did for an explanation of the Carnot Cycle. The great stone fireplace in the Mitchell living room seemed to be forever alight, radiating warmth to an encircling group of young people who talked and laughed, and argued a little, and talked some more.

ONE EVENING, when Mackay Hayes was twelve years old, he interrupted his homework to ask a question. "Uncle Charles, what is a root?"

Uncle Charles put aside his newspaper and thoroughly explained roots and powers. He finished the explanation by saying, "Now tell me the cube root of 27."

"Three."

"Raise the number 2 to the fourth power."

Without hesitation the boy answered, "Sixteen."

Uncle Charles smiled and leaned forward and ruffled the boy's hair. "Good," he said.



"Now raise the number 8 to the 16th power."

Young Mackay Hayes stared at him. Not more than four seconds went by before he said, "281, 474, 976, 710, 656."

THE SMILE faded from Uncle Charles' face; without speaking, he got up and found paper and pencil. After working for a few minutes he asked Hayes to repeat the answer. It checked. Uncle Charles wrote for another moment and then asked, "What is the square root of 119,550, 669,121?"

Hayes considered, while Uncle Charles kept an eye on the clock; In twenty seconds Hayes said, "345,761."

Uncle Charles nodded, wrote some more, and said, speaking slowly, "Find a number whose cube, less 19, multiplied by its cube shall be equal to the cube of 6."

The words were hardly out when Hayes said, "Three."

Uncle Charles put down the pencil. "My boy," he said heavily, "You are a calculator."

"What's that?"

Uncle Charles explained. He

pulled some books off the shelves and sat down with Hayes, and the two of them went over the histories of the calculating prodigies of the past. Long past Hayes' bedtime they talked, while Uncle Charles made clear the nature of the odd ability.

IN THE years that followed, the Mitchells carefully nurtured Hayes' gift, taking care that the usual methods of teaching mathematics did nothing to bury it. In Hayes' nineteenth year, it became apparent that he was capable of original thought in the field of mathematics; his peculiar calculating ability was not an isolated talent, as is so often the case, but was firmly imbedded in rich creative soil.

At twenty, Hayes had published three papers. His method of presentation of his own papers created a stir in mathematical circles. He developed a technic for interlacing the flow of technical language with wry comments on human behavior, politics, and anything else that occurred to him. The older men were not certain that mathematics should be treated

so lightly, but the younger men loved it; and all conceded that the mathematical content of the papers was excellent. By the time Hayes presented his doctoral dissertation—which brought the Games Theory to a high degree of refinement—he had established a wide reputation as a promising young mathematician. His calculating ability did nothing to lessen his reputation.

By the time the Goks arrived, Hayes was teaching mathematics at the same college as Uncle Charles; Hayes continued to live with the Mitchells. Mackay Hayes, as a young man, was a quiet fellow with a warm smile who never argued with anyone. He made friends easily. And if, on rare occasions, the sparkle in his eyes faded and he seemed to lose touch with his surroundings, no one noticed. That was Mackay Hayes when the Goks first arrived.

**L**IFE IN the small college town continued almost unchanged after the Goks came out of the sky. Most students left to go home, but a few stayed as if nothing had hap-

pened. There was little else that could be done; there was really no place to go. At first, fifty short, ugly ships came out of the sky and poured blistering flaming streams of fire on a gaping human populace. In a week, there wasn't a major or middle-size city left standing on Earth. These creatures called Goks settled on the fused rubble and built the heavy, squat dwellings they lived in. Armies of men moved against them, but with little success. The Goks had a weapon—one weapon; but that weapon made it almost impossible for men to fight back effectively.

Within two weeks after the coming of the Goks, we knew that we had to have that Gok weapon to win. Couriers went out and called together a team of scientists; they met in the little town of Swiftwater in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania. Mackay Hayes was one of the mathematicians.

They gathered in a schoolroom, sitting in chairs that were too small, looking at the films that had been taken of the Gok weapon, watching it as it spewed a thin beam of

violet light—light that ripped asunder steel and concrete and rock and brick and wood, anything it touched. They saw motion pictures of the gun as it stood guard over Gok installations. The S-shaped barrel never stopped moving; it weaved constantly, ever seeking a target, tracing intricate patterns against the gleaming background of coils which served to support the barrel.

**T**HE VIEWING of the motion pictures went on, as the scientists tried to get some clue as to how the gun operated. They saw pictures of the Goks as they installed the gun in a vital area and as they dismantled it and moved it elsewhere. They saw how a Gok always stood at the console of the gun with a hand resting on it, somehow giving it the slight guidance it seemed to need. And it was after he had seen the pictures of the Goks themselves that Mackay Hayes began to grow acutely uncomfortable.

The first evening, the group sat around tossing out possibilities of the source of power of the gun, of how it might

work. Hayes listened carefully, but he did not contribute anything. Late that night, a fresh batch of motion pictures came in; and early the next morning the group began going through them.

Again they watched the ceaseless, restless, seeking of the barrel; and for the first time they learned that the gun now had a name. Bess. So much like a dancing woman it, looked as it traced its hypnotic patterns, that the men who had fought against it named it Bess—the beautiful but deadly Bess.

A close-up series of pictures clarified a puzzling feature that they had noticed before. When the Goks assembled Bess in a new position, they constantly referred to a sort of book. It became apparent that the Goks did not understand Bess; they had to put her together out of an instruction book. The shock troops in the front line did not know enough about their complex weapon to assemble and disassemble it unaided.

**I**N MID-MORNING, a new film arrived, and the group

suspended study of Bess to watch it. It concerned the Goks themselves. A Gok had finally been captured, and it was possible to learn how they were put together, inside.

Much like a man they were, as the group had seen from the pictures. They were bipeds, with most of the organs in the right places and a head on top. But there were no eyes, no ears, no nose; instead the skin served as one large sensory organ. Every square centimeter was connected to the brain. And every square centimeter was sensitive to thermal radiation in the region of the short infrared. The Goks could sense warmth—the heat radiation—from a man's body at a distance of a mile at night, or from a mouse in the underbrush motionless at twenty yards. The Gok brain received a perfect picture of its surroundings simply by the differing amounts of heat radiated by the objects around it. And that explained how Bess found her targets: Bess was designed to fire at heat anomalies, with only a slight amount of guidance. Or she could be set to sweep back and forth over an

area, blasting enough of it that nothing effective remained. Bess was a versatile, almost-automatic gun.

THE NEW knowledge about the anatomy of the Goks contributed greatly to an understanding of how Bess worked. The group studying the films felt pleased; they were getting somewhere.

Mackay Hayes sat in the semi-darkened room, watched the dissection of the Gok, and listened to the running explanation that accompanied it. The discomfort inside him turned and twisted and seethed and began to grow. Repressed memories began to tug at their bonds. Hayes' breath grew short and choppy. He crossed his arms in front of his stomach and hugged himself; he felt his skin grow clammy. And then on the screen he saw the dissector peel away a portion of the Gok skin to show the underlying tissue. The bubble of pain inside Hayes burst and flowed all through him.

He was on his feet screaming, "Stop. Stop."

STARTLED gasps came from the other scientists.

The lecturer stopped the projector and turned on the lights; all eyes stared at Hayes. He stood, trembling, sweating, fighting to regain control of himself. His mouth was open, and his panting breath was clearly audible in the suddenly quiet room.

Hayes swallowed, started to speak, and swallowed again. "I'm sorry"—the words were choked—"I'm sorry. I cannot work with you on this. I...I just can't do it."

"Doctor Hayes, are you ill?" The lecturer stepped toward him in concern. "We'll have a doctor here in a moment." He turned to go out the door.

"No." Hayes' voice was high-pitched. "It's not that; it's just that I can't work to...to kill these creatures. I...I'm not able to. I don't...I can't." He shuddered. "I'm sorry."

The silence in the room took on a new character, and Hayes felt it. With shoulders drooping, he walked to the door. When he reached it he turned around and started to speak into that stony silence. The words failed him. For a long moment he stood, and then he said, so softly that they could

hardly hear, "I'm sorry." And he left.

## II

IT TOOK him two days to work his way home. The Goks did not concern themselves with roads or railroads, but concentrated instead on the population centers. So Hayes hitch-hiked, walked, and slept in fields; and in two days he was home with the Mitchells.

Charles Mitchell listened carefully while Hayes told him what had happened. When he was done, Mitchell nodded and said, "My boy, you did the right thing. You are the way you are, and there is nothing you or anyone else can do." Mitchell looked down at the floor. "There's no use your fighting this thing, Mackay; you will only harm yourself. Try to accept it, and don't be concerned about what anybody else thinks."

Hayes nodded, pain on his face. Mitchell shook his head. "I'm surprised that those others did not sympathize with you. Every one of them knows your background."

Mitchell placed both hands

on Hayes' shoulders, looked past him at Mary, and said, "Did they think that because no scar tissue showed, none was there?"

**T**HE NEXT few weeks passed rapidly. Hayes lost himself in the clean cool realm of mathematics. Occasionally he had to go out to the surrounding fields and help harvest the corn. It was early fall, and many men were away fighting the Goks. But the smell of the fields was good, and the hard work and the perspiration helped wipe away the knots of pain.

At the end of the fourth week, a man named Doyle, wearing the uniform of an infantry colonel, stopped in to talk to Hayes. He told Hayes that the government needed him, and needed him badly; and he asked if Hayes would volunteer for hazardous duty. Hayes asked him what kind of duty was involved, but the colonel would not say. Hayes asked if it involved killing Goks, and the colonel said, "Not directly." After further questioning, the colonel told him that the duty was indirect-

ly related to the war effort, and that Goks would die as a result of Hayes' successful efforts—whereupon Hayes refused.

Colonel Doyle stared at Hayes with the same look in his eyes as had been present in the eyes of the scientists when Hayes had walked out. The colonel said, "Do you know what you are saying? You are refusing to help eliminate the greatest threat to mankind that has ever existed. Man, this is not only your country that is at stake here; it is the entire planet. These Goks are out to wipe out all of us. This is no time for personal feelings. We need you."

"There are other mathematicians better than I."

The colonel looked at him strangely and said, "Believe me, Doctor Hayes, men like you are rare, very rare. One has tried and already failed. We've got to have you."

Hayes did not look at him as he said, "I'm sorry."

**A**NGER FLASHED across the colonel's face. He stood up and said, "All right, then; but don't think you are

safe in a little village like this. The Goks are beginning to move out. They are burning up the smaller towns and villages now. You'll get yours, Doctor Hayes; you'll get yours whether you fight or not." And he stalked off.

Hayes was still sitting there when Charles Mitchell came up to him. Mitchell put an arm around his shoulder and said, "It is hard, Mackay; I know it is hard. But there is nothing that says that the path a man takes should be easy. Your Aunt Mary and I understand."

Hayes smiled a tired smile and said, "Thank you, Uncle Charles. A few words from you are what I need every now and then."

IT WAS two weeks later, in the early evening, while the Mitchells and Hayes were having dinner, that they heard the rumbling tearing sound of a hovering ship. They stared at each other, and Mitchell said, "Goks. We've got to get out of the house, to the woods at the end of the street."

They had just left the front door, moving almost at a run, when Aunt Mary said, "Wait.

My silver. I must get my silver."

Before they could stop her she had turned and darted back into the house. Charles Mitchell raced after his wife, calling to her to stop, and Hayes followed Mitchell. Mary reached the second-floor closet where she stored the silver. She flung open the door and lifted down the chest and handed it to her husband as he came up to her.

"Mary, you shouldn't have stopped. Now hurry," he said.

They started down the stairs. They had reached the downstairs foyer when the beam from the gun called Bess traversed the house. From the ridgepole down through the concrete basement floor the tight violet beam sliced the entire house in half. The wood and plaster and wiring and pipes and brick and concrete exploded like so much gunpowder at the touch of the beam. Fire flared into being along the line of the slice. And in the foyer in the center of the house lay Mary Mitchell, a part of her on each side of the smoking and burning cut in the floor.

Charles Mitchell stared in disbelief. The chest of silver fell from nerveless fingers, fell and broke open, spilling knives and forks and spoons out onto the smoking floor.

**M**ITCHELL fell on his knees alongside the body of his wife. A shuddering moan broke from his chest and he tenderly touched his wife's still face. Hayes laid a hand on his shoulder and said, "Charles, we have to leave here; we can come back later."

There was no response from Mitchell. Hayes looked around at the flames climbing higher in the house and then stepped to the front door to look out. As he reached it, the beam from the gun called Bess came again. It slashed the house in a nice mathematical perpendicular to the first line. The beam passed very close to Hayes; the exploding woodwork flattened him against the door of the hall closet. He recovered and looked at Mitchell. The beam had crossed Mitchell in the region of the lower hips.

Hayes leaped to his side. Mitchell turned a tortured face to him, coughing in the smoke.

"Mackay, why did they do this to us?" He coughed. "We never did anything to them." He turned his head to his wife; the tears poured from his eyes. "Why? Why?" His fist pounded the floor. He turned his head to Hayes again and said, "Mackay, I want you to promise me something. I want you to promise me that you will drive these monsters out. Kill them, drive them away, wipe them out." Mitchell's voice rose and broke.

Hayes said, "Uncle Charles. Don't say that. You know..."

Mitchell raised a hand and grasped Hayes by the shoulder. "Promise me," he said. An ominous gurgle sounded in his throat; a film began to form over his eyes. Hayes turned his head away.

The hand on his shoulder twitched and tightened. Mitchell's voice was hoarse, unrecognizable, as he said, "Promise, Mackay. Promise you'll avenge this. Hurry, Mackay. Promise."

**H**AYES TURNED his head to look at Mitchell, not really seeing him. The words appeared in his mouth unbid-



den, unsought, fought-against, rather. "I promise."

The glaze in Mitchell's eyes deepened, but the tortured twisting of the mouth eased. And as the glaze pushed aside the spark of life, the face settled into a peaceful, contented expression that was to remain fixed in Hayes' mind.

The flames ate higher, and the smoke billowed profusely. Sagging beams in the attic broke with a loud snapping sound. Hayes shook himself and rose to his feet; blindly he plunged out the front door and onto the lawn. He walked away and never heard the crackling roar of the house as it collapsed behind him.

### III

**H**E WALKED out of the burning village, unseeing and unhearing, oblivious of the flames and ruins around him. He walked until he stumbled upon an anti-aircraft artillery unit that was moving into position in front of the next town. Hayes told the commander who he was and that he wanted to volunteer for duty, about which a

Colonel Doyle had talked to him. The commander of the unit spoke into a radio for half an hour until he finally received his instructions. Four hours later, a helicopter dropped in to pick up Hayes. He climbed aboard, unseeing, uncaring, his mind numb. It flew him to a nearby airfield where a jet met him and took him to Grey, Georgia; and there Hayes found out what he was to do.

The team of scientists had not yet been able to solve the problem of the gun called Bess. The beam was a neutron beam—that much was known—but its source and its control remained a mystery. So while the team of scientists struggled with the problem from a straight scientific approach, a second team took a different tack.

Hayes met Cranch, the leader of the second team. Cranch was a large man, who moved and spoke with extraordinary slowness. He took Hayes past several guards and into a building. And as the leader led the way up a flight of stairs Hayes noted that Cranch ran up lightly on the balls of his feet; he

drifted, like water flowing uphill. It made Hayes feel uncomfortable; it was animal-like.

**I**N A ROOM at the head of the stairs, Hayes met several other men who were lounging around when he and Cranch walked in. They, too, were slow-spoken men—all with weather-beaten faces, all with a disconcerting way of looking level-eyed at and through a man. Each moved like the slow uncoiling of a python, and the hand-clasp of each left the fingers tingling. Even through his numbness, Hayes felt weirdly out of place as they stood and frankly looked him over.

Cranch waved at an object hanging on one wall of the room. "There's why you're here, Hayes."

Hayes looked at it. It vaguely resembled an old-fashioned diving suit but it was larger, more clumsy, and the surface was of an odd texture. Hayes walked over and examined it, too sick at heart to be much concerned. The surface was made up of tiny metal slats mounted on so that the slats

rotated. Hayes placed a hand on the surface. Cranch's voice spoke in his ear, startlingly close; he had not heard him approach. "Touch it easy, Hayes; it's mighty delicate."

Hayes turned and said, "What is it?"

"A heat suit."

Hayes did not answer, but he turned and bent and inspected the suit more closely. Lying underneath the tiny slats could be seen a network of fine wires, so close together that they touched, each with its shiny coating of insulating lacquer.

**H**AYES' MIND began to function. Heat suit—the network of wires heated up, the revolving tiny slats allowed a controlled amount of radiation to escape; heat suit—controlled thermal radiation. The pieces dropped into place.

Hayes turned and said, "The Goks. The Goks cannot sense a man in that suit; he'd be invisible. To the Goks, that suit would be a cloak of invisibility." His voice dropped as he turned to look at the suit again, interested now. "What a conception."

Cranch flashed a look at the others. They all raised their eyebrows and nodded. Cranch said, "Nice going, Hayes; you got down to that fast."

Hayes said, "Who is going to wear it?"

There was no answer, so Hayes turned to look around the room. The men looked at him quietly, and Hayes understood.

He dropped his head, and then raised it and said, "Does this involve killing Goks?"

"It sure does," said Cranch. "It involves killing as many of those filthy animals as we can. With this suit..." He stopped, cut short by the obvious pain in Hayes eyes. Then he continued, "What's the matter, Hayes. Don't you want to kill Goks?"

**H**AYES CLOSED his eyes and fought to control the shudder that began to build up inside him. Then he opened them and looked straight at Cranch and said, "That is right, Mr. Cranch. I do not want to kill Goks."

He met Cranch's gaze full, and then looked at each of the other men in turn. The

in the room grew tight as the men stared at Hayes. He felt again the stoniness of a silence, but now there were no apologies, no fears. He met their eyes.

He could feel the change as it happened. The stoniness went out of the air as the men looked at him and he looked back. When he felt it was gone completely, he said, "But I will do whatever has to be done in the suit; tell me about it."

Cranch nodded. "Good, Hayes. You won't have to do any killing yourself; we'll take care of that. But you've got a tough job in that suit. You've got to walk out right in the middle of the Goks and take the Manual away from them."

"The what?"

"The Manual. That's the book the Goks use when they set up Bess; the instruction book. Haven't you heard of it?"

"Oh. Yes, I've heard of it. I just never heard it called the Manual. They keep it right on Bess' pedestal."

"That's right. They keep it there so that if something goes wrong, and Bess burns up, the Manual burns up too. They

know it's valuable. If we get that Manual, we get Bess; so they keep it where they think no man can ever go."

ONE OF THE other men spoke up. "Hayes, maybe you can tell me something. If the Goks have no eyes, how can they read this Manual?"

Hayes nodded. "Yes. The radiation from the black print is different from that of the paper, at any temperature."

"Should have known. I've seen how sensitive that skin is." He started to speak further, but another man nudged him to silence. The motion was so obvious that Hayes stared and then said, "What's the matter?"

The two men shuffled uncomfortably and looked at the floor.

Cranch said, "That's all right." He turned to Hayes. "You ought to know: You are the fourth man to wear that suit, or one just like it. The other three didn't make out so well."

Hayes nodded, not caring.

"Well," continued Cranch. "You better get some sleep;

you look worn out. We'll get started training you in the suit as soon as you wake up."

Hayes shook his head and said, "Let's start now. I couldn't sleep, anyway."

"Right." And the training started.

THE CONTROLS in the hands of the suit were complex, but Hayes soon learned to manipulate them. Learning to walk in the suit was more difficult; it had but one leg to accommodate the wearer's two—the intricate circuits in the suit were simplified that way. Within two days, Hayes was able to move around in an opening in the forest, undetected by the most delicate thermocouples.

He grew to know and like the men that worked with him on the operation. A few of them were scientists, and Hayes was interested to see the easy friendship that had grown up between these and the others who had been guides and hunters and trappers. After thinking about it, Hayes realized that the two kinds of men possessed one thing in common: each had a knack of a

simple, direct, and uncomplicated manner of talking and thinking and doing things.

ON THE FOURTH day the chance came. A group of Goks left their settlement and went out to gather a crop of the wild onions they seemed to eat. A ship hovered nearby while they assembled a Bess on the ground. If the Goks adhered to their pattern, the ship would leave once Bess was ready to operate. The chance was too good to miss. It was a clear, early fall day—no wind, no clouds, a perfect day for the suit. Cranch and Hayes talked it over briefly. More practice would have been highly desirable, but Hayes was anxious to get on with it.

Cranch looked at him and said, "You don't figure on getting yourself killed out there, do you? Cause if you do, say it now; this is too important to have a man just use the suit for suicide."

An answer formed in Hayes' mind, and he began to enunciate it. He began to say the words that would tell Cranch not to worry. He began to talk, but he did not. It struck him

then—a blinding flash of insight, a burning realization that left him shaken. *Cranch was right.*

Buried deep in his mind these last four days had been the certain knowledge that all his problems would soon be over. How easy it all was. One false move in the suit, one flash of violet light, and a man died who wanted to die. A slight tingle, perhaps even a modest burning sensation, but what a small price to pay. At one stroke everything was gone, everything, a remembering of a time long ago—a searing, tearing memory of a time when the mind of a young boy was all but shattered; and a face—a face in repose against a background of a burning house and a dead woman on the floor. At one stroke everything would be gone.

"You can't do it that way, Son." Cranch's voice was soft. "You got a job to do; now—are you going to do it?"

HAYES DID not have time to analyze his feelings, but he looked at Cranch, and said, "I'll do it."

"Good. Let's go."

The team of twenty-one men climbed into a B-75, just outside of Grey; in half an hour, they let down at McGuire. The ever-present helicopter took them over to Millersville, Pennsylvania, flying low as they drew close, keeping behind a hill. The copter landed in a broad flat ravine, about a quarter-mile from Herr's Meadow where the Goks were.

The group moved in fast and scouted the area. Hayes climbed into the suit in the woods at the edge of the meadow while the rest took up their positions. Hayes kept his mind off the Goks as he began charging up the suit. While it was charging, he paced back and forth to make certain the feet were right, and to get the swing of the peculiar sort of walk he had to use.

Then he got the word over the suit's radio to stand by, so he stopped pacing and moved to the edge of the meadow as far as the power line would let him. He stood in the suit, looking out through the foliage, and he could just see the Goks out in the center of Herr's Meadow. The air in the suit was warm and already slightly

stale. He leaned forward and felt the tug of the power line connected to the suit high between the shoulder blades. Fifteen minutes, that's all he had. Fifteen minutes of power once the plug was pulled out. Hayes stood there and looked and waited for the word to move out. It came.

#### - IV

**H**AYES MADE a final adjustment on the suit. He leaned forward to pull the plug out, took a deep breath, and stepped out into the open.

About one hundred yards in front of him, out in the center of the meadow, the Goks were digging up the wild onions. Hayes peered at them, seeing them with difficulty—even in the open—through the maze of wires that clothed the vision port in the helmet. He moved then. He walked slowly, heading toward the center of the meadow, moving carefully and smoothly in the sliding motion he had practiced. He could feel his hips swing in a feminine fashion, forced to move in that manner by the one leg in the suit.

HE COVERED ten feet, and stopped. His fingers played over the array of controls in the hands of the suit, and the rear thermocouple took a temperature reading of the foliage he had just left. He watched the directional dial in the helmet as it traced the course of the sensitive element of the thermocouple. A prism allowed him to see the foliage itself, and he was readily able to judge the distance he had come. Almost without thinking about it, he began to perform his calculations. Ten feet in front, temperature 532.62 degrees Fahrenheit absolute, emissivity—oh, it must be 0.886 at that temperature; an estimate of the absorbtivity followed, and then Hayes' mind began to click.

He raised the temperature to the fourth power in his head and pushed through the necessary calculations. In a few seconds, he had it and his fingers moved over the battery of controls in the hands of the suit. A little more heat in the region of the knee; the upper right quadrant a little cooler; top of the helmet cooler, too, only more so. He completed

the settings, and peered out at the Goks grouped beneath Bess. There was not the slightest indication that they had observed anything to upset them. He was about to step forward again when there was a whisper in his ear. "The adjustment is satisfactory, Hayes. You exhibit good thermal blending with your background; no correction is needed."

HAYES RECOGNIZED the precise voice of Cellers. Cellers was hidden in the bushes across the meadow on the other side of the Goks. Cellers was a meticulous observer; if he were satisfied, the suit was in good adjustment. So Hayes moved on again, out toward the center of the meadow.

Hayes moved slower this time but he played his thermocouple as he moved, feeling his way with his feet as best he could without looking. Calculations ran continuously through his mind, and his fingers adjusted the controls to prevent any portion of the suit from becoming a thermal anomaly.

"Feet up, Hayes." A voice was urgent in his ear. "You're pressing down on the grass too hard, scuffing it. You're leaving thermal footprints; pick up your feet a little more."

It was Gantz in the bushes behind him. Hayes stopped, but Gantz said, "Don't stop. Move on a step and then stop; you'll leave a mark if you stop there."

Hayes took another step and then held up again. Panic began to build up in him, but he forced it down. After all, this was no different from the many test runs he had made in the suit—tests in which the finest thermocouples known to man had been trained on him. And they had not been able to detect him, not even with thermocouples so sensitive that they had been able to pick up the heat in a lighted cigaret at a distance of ten miles—so sensitive that they could find a rabbit crouched in the grass at half a mile. Yet they could not detect Hayes inside the suit at twenty feet. And wasn't this what he had really wanted all along?

**H**AYES SQUINTED out the vision port of the hel-

met, and he was no longer certain about what he wanted. The Goks were closer now. For the first time he was wearing the suit when it really counted. Tests are all very well; they teach a man much—but there is a big difference between a dry run and the real thing. In a dry run, a man can make a mistake and live; in the real thing he cannot. And it is the knowing of it that counts—the knowing that a simple error will bring more than a reprimand in the helmet earphones, far more. He was there now; he was at last in a position where he could make a choice, Live or die. Live or...

Gantz spoke again. "Too long in one spot. Move."

Hayes started to lift his right leg, but he checked himself. He did not want to move; he did not know what he wanted, not yet. He blinked his eyes, hard—so hard that the upper part of his face wrinkled. He became aware of the perspiration on his forehead and in his scalp.

"Move." Gantz's voice was urgent. "You'll leave a mark in the grass there; they'll sense you."



**H**AYES CHOKED off a groan and stepped forward, stepped forward without first checking conditions around him. One step and he stopped, horrified, heart pounding. Without checking he had stepped off. That was the way to certain death; the choice would be made for him. Without looking at the Goks, he traversed his thermocouple over the foliage behind him. It was further away now, so the absorbtivity had changed. The emissivity was slightly lower—temperature 532.64 Fahrenheit absolute. Push it through. Ah, there it is. His fingers caressed the dials, dropping slightly the external appearance of temperature on the suit, reducing almost uniformly the heat over the entire surface of the suit. Then he looked at the Goks and at the weaving wandering Bess. No sign. He breathed deeply; the episode of calculation had been good for him, calmed him as it should. He moved forward.

"Right side too cool; about point three degrees higher, I should say." Hayes recognized the brittle New York accent of Willard on his right flank.

Without stopping his forward motion, Hayes made a correction. "Good. Very nice adjustment." Hayes' heart warmed. That was the way with Willard; no matter what the situation, he could always find something good to say.

**H**E KEPT moving, walking in that slow, sliding, hip-swinging motion. He was in his stride now, and foot by foot he drew closer. The perspiration was gone, although it was hot in the suit. His mind was deeply engrossed in the calculations and there were no corrections from the circle of watchers to distract him. He had the suit under perfect control.

"Five minutes." It was Spiegel, calling off the passage of time. Hayes could visualize Spiegel in his mind's eye, crouched behind the bank, a stopwatch in his right hand, three more watches on the ground in front of him to check. And his left hand would be resting lightly on the rocket launcher at his side.

Five minutes—and Hayes was halfway out. He decided to stop and take stock. A reflecting prism showed him that the

grass at his feet was about as thin as he could find; it was safe to stop for a moment. He peered out at the Goks.

The tight group of Goks was working its way slowly down the green meadow, seeking out the wild onions, carrying them over near Bess and making a neat little pile of them. Bess stood to one side, weaving restlessly, sweeping the trees and bushes, its tiny maw seeking a target; the inevitable Gok stood at it, with the inevitable hand resting on the console to help control Bess' almost automatic action. Hayes could see Bess much more clearly, and she was a terrifying sight to see so close. But it was time to move.

**H**E WALKED more swiftly now, with growing confidence in his ability to handle the suit in front of the Goks. He approached the slight embankment that slanted across his path to Bess. He trained his forward thermocouple on the embankment where the grass was thin, and noted with satisfaction that the temperature was only slightly less than they had expected. Shouldn't be too

difficult. It was too bad that he had to cross in front of it, but this route still seemed the safest way to Bess, all things considered.

He came to within a few feet of where the little embankment dropped a foot or two. He glanced again at his forward thermocouple dial and stopped, goose-flesh crawling up his spine. What? Temperature 521.09? Impossible. He inspected the region carefully, and then saw it. Water. The grass concealed a six-inch gully that contained an inch of slowly running water, cool water. The grass and earth and sand within an eight-inch area all radiated heat to the water, and produced a belt appreciably colder than the surrounding area—a cold belt that must be apparent to the Goks.

**H**AYES FELT the perspiration break down his forehead and trickle into his eyes. He blinked his eyes rapidly, and shook his head as vigorously as possible inside the helmet. He gulped air and blew it hard up over his nose toward his eyes to try to blow the

perspiration away. He blinked, and then he could see again. He forced himself to study the tiny cold belt on the ground in front of him. There was no way to avoid it; it had to be crossed, and that would take some doing.

The higher area of thin grass lay about a foot above the little cold belt. Hayes knew that he would have to establish two regions of different temperature in the lower part of his suit, while maintaining the rest of the suit at the temperature of his background. His mind raced.

For the first time he spoke. "Cellers. Read me the thin area on the bank. There's water under there and I'll need my forward thermocouple for it. You call the thin area, and I'll control for the water. Can you read the area?"

Hayes heard muffled grunts and curses as the circle of watchers responded to the news of the water. Then Cellers' precise voice answered. "I can barely read it; make your heat balance and then move on. I will endeavor to call our corrections. Perhaps you should cross the region rapidly.

Cranch, what is your opinion?"

THERE WAS a pause while Cranch considered; then his deep bass voice filled Hayes' helmet. "No, it would be luck if we got away with that. We cannot trust to luck. But Hayes is in the best position to judge. What do you think, Hayes? Don't you think you should take it slow rather than fast?"

Hayes mouth tightened in a thin-lipped smile. Here was the place. No one could blame him if there were a slip-up here; no one would know whether the mistake were accidental or purposeful. No one. But the face of Charles Mitchell rose before him, etched in the thin grass near the gully, a face so lately grown peaceful. Ah yes, *he* would know.

Annoyance replaced the pain in Hayes. Why could he not do as he wanted? Was not his life his own? It would have been so easy, if Cranch had not understood what was really in his mind. But now? The annoyance grew to anger. All right: Here is a problem; let us solve it, and solve it right. If Bess fires, she fires. What

does it matter? Let us get on here.

"Yes," said Hayes. "Slow is the way. Cellers, you ready?"

"I am ready."

**H**AYES PLAYED his thermocouple on the chilled region, made his calculation, and stepped off with the relaxed boldness that comes from complete freedom of fear. Cellers' voice whispered in his ear and Hayes made a separate calculation. His fingers were busy, almost as busy as his mind. The perspiration went unnoticed, and he moved forward almost unseeing from the concentration, a slow steady sliding sort of walk. He did not think of the Goks; he thought of nothing but the development and movement of two bands of differing temperature around the single leg of the suit. And he moved ahead.

The region began to drop behind, so he raised the cold bands further up the suit. Cellers' voice kept up a constant drone in his ear, calling for warmer or cooler, higher or lower. He was only a few feet from moving out from between the Goks and the cold region

when he noticed a change in the timber of Cellers' voice.

Hayes slowed his forward motion. Cellers seemed out of breath, and when Hayes slowed down Cellers was able to ease off the constant repetition. Cellers said, "Wait. I cannot see the last few feet very clearly. I must move higher if I am to give you accurate control. Ah, there. All right; move slowly, please."

Hayes stepped off. During the last few feet, Cellers' voice went up again and it was apparent that he was stretching to see. Hayes saw what happened out of the corner of his eye.

**B**ESS SUDDENLY stopped her ceaseless hunting, stopped for an instant and then spun on her axis. A fine line of purple light leaped from her maw and struck the bushes across from Hayes, over where Cellers was concealed. A sharp and vicious sound wave rocked Hayes back a little; a two-foot section of bushes and earth spewed skyward, glowing and flaming and smcking. And Bess was instantly back to her ceaseless hunting and seeking.

There was silence on the network, no report of what had happened to Cellers. There was really no need; everyone there had seen what was left of a man when Bess got through with him.

The Goks continued digging the onions. They had sensed the temperature anomaly that was Cellers, and Bess had blasted it. They did not know if they had killed a lurking animal or a bird; they did not know and did not care that a man had died.

Hayes moved on, feeling no emotion except an almost careless urgency. He was within twenty five feet of Bess now—so close that he could see the Manual lying on the base plate; he fixed his eyes on it and moved faster.

"It's going to cover. Hold it, Hayes. Pick up the shadow before it gets here so that we can give Hayes some warning."

**H**AYES STOPPED, puzzled. What were they talking about? That was Cranch's voice, so something was up. Then Cranch said, "loud coming, Hayes. We hoped it would miss the sun,

but it'll cover for about twenty seconds. We'll try to tell you what the drop in temperature is in the grass outside the meadow; we'll read the shadow before it gets to you. Wheaton, you in Cellers' place?"

"Yes."

"Good. Check Hayes from that angle. Dallas, how long to cover?"

A pause, then, "Fifteen seconds."

"Stand by, Hayes. From the southwest."

Hayes leaned back as far as he could, but he was not able to see the cloud; his field of view was too limited. He straightened and faced the southwest; a quarter of a turn was enough. Here it was again, another chance. Hayes became conscious of a great weariness.

Another chance? No. He was not going to go through that again. Just don't worry about it. Handle the problem as if he were sitting at his desk, and who cares what happens? If he got through the cloud shadow, he was well on his way toward keeping a promise; if Bess reached out and touched him, why that was an end to it. And so he relaxed and wait-

ed for the shadow with a monumental unconcern, as if he were waiting for the light at a street corner to change.

"Two degree drop in five seconds, two point three Jegrees in ten seconds. No more time. Eight seconds to cover."

## V

**H**AYES' FINGERS caressed the controls. His mind raced. From the feet up—cool the suit from the feet up a total of two degrees in five seconds. Bring the cool zone up the suit—how fast? Use his rearview prism to watch the cloud shadow behind him, judge it, play it by sight.

He saw the shadow pass the tree tops across the meadow and swoop down to the grass. It sped toward him, a darkness on the grass, eating out the heat in the grass—not much, but enough to make him stand out like a flaming torch to the Gok's sense of perception. Like a great mouth, the shadow engulfed him.

Relaxed fingers played on the controls. The feet grew cooler. Hayes stared behind

him and brought the cool zone up, slowly, judging the angle that existed between the Goks and the edge of the racing shadow. He cooled the entire suit a degree as the lower zone rose higher. And soon the background too was blanked by the shadow.

Just as the cool zone rose over the helmet and off the suit Hayes saw the treetops in front of him spring into green brightness. The cloud was about to pass; the sun was about to strike him. And even as Hayes waited to repeat the process with the oncoming heat, he noted the Goks; their featureless faces were a travesty on human appearance. Hayes felt a gathering chill at the base of his spine; then the shadow was behind him, and Hayes was in the sun again.

**I**T WAS THE same thing all over, only in reverse. The warm zone at his feet, rising slowly, the whole suit warming at the same time, but at a different and lower rate from that of the warm zone. And then the shadow was gone; steady state conditions existed again in the meadow. A quarter turn,

and Hayes began to move; then he stopped as he realized something.

There had been no called corrections, none at all. He listened carefully and heard the gentle panting over the microphone, followed by what sounded like a series of heavy sighs. The circle of watchers was still on the network. But that meant...that meant his control had been perfect. It was Willard who said it. Hayes recognized the sharp nasal quality of the voice. "Nice going, Hayes. On the nose, boy. On the nose."

"Eleven minutes." Spiegel cut it. Only four minutes of power left in the suit. What had happened to the ten minute call? Oh yes, the cloud—the cloud that Hayes had mastered. His lips curled back over his teeth as he thought of it. Successful again. Nothing seemed to go wrong. What was the matter with Bess? His clamness fled, and the pain began to build up in him again.

**H**AYES BROUGHT himself back with a fierce shake of the head. The snarl on his lips was fixed now; his eyes

were narrowed, staring at the Manual. Bess loomed over him, eight feet in front of him, but it was the Manual he stared at. His eyes were wide, bulging, but they were clear and bright. The snarl was greater, and there was a low rumble that started deep in his throat. His forehead was free of perspiration, his mind was clear and his hands were true; and without the slightest wrong move he walked up to Bess and stood over the Manual.

Bess loomed over him. A Gok stood with a hand on the console not five feet from him; the other Goks were drawn out in a line about twelve feet away.

Hayes looked at the near Gok, and horror began to well up inside him. The Gok seemed so human in outline—yet the featureless and symmetrical head was like something out of a child's nightmare. The Gok seemed a dead dumb thing, but it lived, and it should not have. And despite its blank appearance Hayes knew that it was acutely sensitive to what went on around it.

The contrast between appearance and reality was so

shocking as to cause Hayes' finely tuned mind to stagger. Almost, then, he lost control of himself. A sob burst from his throat before he could choke it off; but the sound of it, echoing hollowly inside the helmet, served to jolt him out to the edge of the rising whirlpool of terror.

He shook his head and forced his eyes away from the Gok. The Manual. Got to get the Manual. He forced his mind to consider the Manual. He looked at it, and stared at it, and let it fill his mind. He was ready then, ready to continue.

**E**VERY MUSCLE taut, every nerve drawn like piano wire, heart pounding, breath bubbling through that low rumble—yet his mind worked coldly on the problem of bending over and picking up the Manual.

He played the forward thermocouple over the Manual and the adjacent area. Carefully he bent slightly forward, bringing the rear of the helmet and shoulders into thermal match with the line-of-sight of the near Gok. He moved his hands

out together, sliding them toward the Manual and a little above it, changing the temperature on the hands to that of the pedestal. Soon his hands covered the Manual, shielding it from view; carefully and slowly, he reduced the temperature of the hands to that of the front of the suit. Then he picked up the Manual keeping it covered with his hands. He drew it toward his chest and dropped it into the pouch-like pocket there.

**I**N THAT instant, the tenor of the entire operation changed. The circle of watchers assumed new duties. Additional rocket launchers were made ready just below the limit of the Goks' ability to sense them. One launcher in particular made ready to destroy Bess, should she make a move toward Hayes. The men in the circle gathered their legs under them, ready to spring into the open. No longer could the suit be destroyed if something went wrong, for that suit now contained the Manual; the suit must be protected, no matter what the cost.

Hayes took a careful step



backwards, using his rear thermocouple as he went. He took another. He swallowed hard to cut off the short choppy breathing, and he forced himself to suck in air in a long sobbing sigh. His fingertips moved surely over the controls and the tension began to leave him. He stepped back again, and again.

"Breeze coming from the northeast, cold, eight degrees drop." The voice rose higher, panicky. "Rich in carbon dioxide, high in absorbtivity. Time of arrival about fifteen seconds."

IT WAS Peters to the north of him. Hayes made a quarter turn left to face the oncoming breeze. His eyes, stared, glazing, protruding, the rumble in his throat appeared again. The breeze would be worse than the cloud, far worse, but he would handle it, somehow. There was no choice to make now; he had the Manual. Let the breeze bring an enrichment of carbon dioxide with the attendant higher absorbtion of infrared, he would play it by sight again. What matter if there were fewer thermocou-

ples to check him from the circle of watchers; he didn't need them. He took his fingers off the controls momentarily, flexed them, and gently replaced them. Then he saw the breeze.

It made the grass turn a darker color where it bent and turned the blades of grass. Hayes knew the grass would appear darker to the Goks too.

Cranch's deep voice said, "Watch yourself, Hayes; stand by to move out."

There was time for two short breaths. Then the breeze was on him.

HE BROUGHT the entire front of the suit up a degree and a half to maintain thermal integrity with his background, and to offset the cooling effect of the breeze on the suit. He cooled the feet and began bringing the cool band up. He guessed at the higher absorbtivity of the air and took the entire suit down another half a degree.

He heard Cranch say, "It's slipping away; stand by."

There was a tight silence on the network while Hayes frantically tried to bring his mind

to bear on the complex temperature problem. His fingers trembled on the dials in the hands, and then a soft Babel of voices spilled into his helmet, no one voice understandable, but all calling for corrections.

Then over the soft voices Cranch's voice rang out. "Count down. Three, two, one, zero."

Nineteen men leaped into the meadow, rocket launchers and automatic weapons belching fire even before the men were clear of the shrubbery. Gantz's rocket hit a twig in front of him and exploded. The concussion hurled Gantz's body into the low branches of a tree where it dangled limply, swaying slightly in the breeze, looking like some laundry hung up to dry.

**A**T THE FIRST movement from the circle of watchers, Bess spun around and spit a bolt of Heinbockle; he was closest. Then, feeling the heat from the explosion of Gantz's rocket, Bess turned through eighty degrees and fired at the site of the explosion. It was this wasted shot that decided the outcome.

Spiegel's rocket had time to fly true to the sunburst of coils that supported the axis of Bess' S-shaped barrel. Bess faltered, and the purposefulness went out of her movements; slowly, as if in pain, her sweeping barrel pointed skyward and held. Then Bess fused herself.

The brilliant burst of heat and light blinded men and Goks alike, but not for long. The Goks fought on with their sidearms. Hayes stayed motionless in the midst of the carnage, a minor temperature anomaly in the midst of major temperature anomalies, unnoticed by the Goks. With his bare hands, Cranch killed the Gok who had controlled Bess, and he did it not five feet from where Hayes was standing. The rest of the Goks were chopped down by gunfire, and it was all over.

They got out of there fast, before other Goks could arrive with another Bess. They did not even stop to take Hayes out of the suit until later.

**T**HEY DELIVERED the Manual to the technical people, and it turned out to be

exactly what they had hoped; it was complete with wiring diagrams. In two months, there was a new Bess fighting on the side of Earth; in another three there were a thousand. Six months after that the Goks were finished. The few that were left alive climbed into their ships and disappeared into the heavens with the same suddenness with which they had appeared, leaving behind a wealth of ships and equipment.

And Hayes. Hayes became a national hero, but not the kind who stood in front of crowds to be applauded. Every one knew his name; everyone knew what he had done; but no one ever saw him. Right after he took that walk in Herr's Meadow he had a talk with the men who had been

with him, and then he left. Not one of those men would ever tell what had been said.

Hayes never went back to his beloved mathematics. For him, mathematics had turned to ashes. So he talked with his circle of watchers, and disappeared. No one ever knew what became of him except those nineteen, and they never told.

But if, some time, you should go hunting up in the lake region of Northern Wisconsin, up near the Canadian border, you will probably hire a guide to show you where the game is and to make sure you don't get lost. And if you do, it might just happen that your guide will be a lean, leather-faced man who never smiles—one of those quiet fellows who never argues with anyone.

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by Thomas N. Scortia

illustrated by EMSH

They were all that was left of a great race when something turned their sun into a nova. And the people aboard the *Alathon* were sure that this had not been a natural disaster, for the same thing had happened to other stars since. And now, as they approached this world, whose sun was about to undergo the same disaster, they hoped to save a few — and perhaps find someone who could tell them about the sentient Thing ...

THE RADIANT Thing which had murdered the sun was gone, and the vast cities of Earth were in flames, when the starship *Alathon* drifted its leviathan bulk to the flame-shattered

ochre plain with the ease and grace of spider silk borne on a spring wind. It rested in the hot night upon its standard vanes, while the vast interior filled with creakings and snapping and rustlings as the anti-

The gas enveloped the fleeing  
man...



gravity machines idled, and the ship settled into the baked earth.

"We're too late," the Captain said.

"Perhaps," replied Lt. Avor, his Executive Officer.

Gorta said, "We have only eight hours." She used the word "hour" clumsily, though the men and women of the ship had learned the language years before—when the first faint radio broadcasts had been intercepted in space.

"Perhaps there are survivors," suggested the Captain.

Gorta's mouth set. "There must be; we can't accept defeat again."

"Someday will be soon enough." The Exec's voice was low and intense.

"We'll find the thing and kill it," the Captain declared, fixing cold, hate-filled eyes upon the bridge viewscreen. Outside, the hot, sodden air—heavy with its invisible burden of vapor—was loosing some of its heat to the great ship's skin; thin wisps of vapor trailed across the forward sections to evaporate again in the hot night.

"Nothing can live in this heat," the Exec objected.

Gorta pointed out that they may have built shelters.

"Then we must find them."

"Yes," the Captain said. "When we find this thing and kill it, there must be a member of this race with us."

"Will we ever?" asked Gorta.

"Don't even voice the thought; that's all we've lived for."

Her lips silently formed a word. Revenge.

"Send out the scouts," the Captain said, and the Exec relayed the order into the ship's intercom.

THEY WATCHED while, far below, the number two lock irised and silver disk-ships scattered like bright scarabs into the molten night.

"Is this the way it happened?" Gorta asked, after a long period of silence.

"What?"

"The way Home died." That was the only word they ever used for the ancient beginning place.

"Yes," the Captain said. "I was twenty when the last of

the Elders in suspended animation awoke. I remember how he told it. The cloud of glowing material came out of space and wrapped itself about our sun; the heat finally turned the sun into a nova, wiping out Home and all the planets past it in the system. Only the *Alathon* and its people escaped."

"There have been others since," said the Exec, "and always the same pattern."

"But that this thing should be alive? How do we know?"

"We have always known."

"You know the story," the Captain reminded Gorta. "It spoke to us."

"Perhaps it is only a legend."

"No!" snapped the Exec.

"If that were so," the Captain said, "the generations that have lived and died aboard this ship would have done so for nothing."

**G**ORTA HAD left the bridge and returned to her quarters on the fourth level when the Captain signaled her. She activated the intercom unit and said, "Yes, sir."

"Gorta, we've found one."

"A survivor?"

"Yes, in the mountains, barely five minutes flight from here."

"He may need medical attention," she said. "I suggest you have him brought to Dispensary Five; I can interrogate him there."

"Agreed." The Captain's voice faded.

By the time she had prepared herself, and made her way down to the dispensary, two men were carrying a silent figure along the corridor toward its door. The Captain and the Exec trailed the two. Gorta motioned them inside, and the two men lowered the silent body to an examination table.

"Is he injured?" she demanded.

"No. Anaesthetic gas."

"That was dangerous; we know nothing of their body chemistries."

"He looks very much like us," the Exec said.

"This means nothing; why did you have to gas him?"

"He wouldn't come with us," replied the man who had spoken before said.

"Didn't you explain what you wanted?"

"Of course."

"Then he thought you were responsible for all that has happened."

"No," the man said; "he knew that we had not destroyed his sun."

The Captain nodded, "Very well; return to your posts."

THE TWO men left, and Gorta busied herself, checking the captive's pulse and respiration. To all intents and outward appearances, the Earthman might have been of the same species as those on the ship, she told the Captain as she prepared the antidote to the gas for injection.

"Did you expect otherwise?"

"Have we found an intelligent race yet that wasn't human?" the Exec asked.

"How did he survive this heat?" Gorta wondered.

"They found him in a cave in the mountains."

"That's no answer," she said, "and all of us know it."

The man's respiration deepened a few seconds after the injection, and his eyes flickered open a moment later. He sat up and looked about him. "You had no right to take me," he said at last.

"You would have died," Gorta told him.

"You have to take me back," the captive demanded.

"Don't be an idiot," the Captain said angrily. "Probably all of your people are dead by now, and in another twelve hours, this very planet will be vapor when your sun turns nova."

"Do you think I don't know this?"

Gorta stood silently, examining him. He looked quite young, with pleasantly nondescript features. Then she noticed the furrows cutting the forehead under his close-cropped hair, and the tiny wrinkles about the knuckles of his hands, and she was not so sure.

"I think you'd better rest for a while," she said.

"I have to get back."

"What's your name, man?" the Captain demanded.

"Joseph," he said, with a wan smile. He lay back on the table. "Perhaps you're right; I will rest for a while before I go."

Gorta turned silently to the Captain.

"Let him alone for the mo-



ment. We still have a great deal to do."

THE REPORTS from the far-ranging scouts continued. The night side of the planet was desolate. Fires still burned in the great cities, but of men there was no trace.

"Not even bodies?" the Captain asked.

"We would have detected any evacuation ships if their technology were capable of mounting such an operation."

"That means that they must still be here," Gorta said.

"Huddling in shelters somewhere underground? No, they had a well-developed science. They would know that such a move was useless."

"Then where are they?"

"I know someone who knows," the Exec said darkly.

"Joseph? He won't tell."

"Make him," the Exec snapped. "Why should we let one man stand in the way of what we've lived for these centuries."

"That's your job, Gorta," the Captain said. "You've been trained for alien contact; you're the best specialist we have. It's up to you."

"And if he won't cooperate..." The Exec left the statement unfinished.

"Would you resort to force?"

"If we have to," the Captain told her.

SHE LEFT the bridge and entered the grav tube to the fifth level. As she fell downward, she thought of the old-young man with his withdrawn air of knowing and not-caring. As though it didn't matter to him that tomorrow, when the sun rose, his world would cease to be; as though it didn't matter that the destruction sweeping upon him and his race was the product of the ravages of some vast space beast which had pillaged scores of suns in the four millennia since Home had been destroyed. For a second, her inner self echoed the hate that had obsessed the people of *Alathon* all these generations.

He was resting quietly in a deep chair with a separate head-rest when she entered. The chair was used for minor surgery about the head, and the separate rest did not allow too much movement. The rest had been positioned so that his

veiled eyes rested directly upon the door as it irised open to receive her.

"I was waiting for you," he said. She moved toward him, reached out and took his pulse.

"YOU SEEM to have avoided any of the after effects of the gas." Gorta produced a light and examined his pupils as he stared directly ahead.

"It seemed that I should talk with you before I left," he said.

"Now, let's not talk of leaving. That's impossible."

"I can't stay too much longer."

"Well, never mind," Gorta said. "Let's talk for the moment. We would like very much to find your people."

"There's no point in looking. They've gone."

"Gone? You mean on ships?"

"No," he said, smiling slightly, "not on ships."

"Then they're still here? Hiding in shelters they've built for themselves?"

"No; I said they were gone. They are no longer on this planet."

"This is ridiculous," Gorta

protested. "Joseph, don't you understand? We've got to find them."

"Why?"

FOR A MOMENT, she stood indecisively. A part of her stirred angrily and she thought of stalking from the room. Another part made her stop and examine him, wondering. For an instant she felt as if he were playing with her, teasing her without malice, indeed with sympathy and . . . yes . . . pity. The thought brought new anger, and she said slowly, "Do you understand what has happened to your sun?"

"Of course. Tomorrow it will become a nova and destroy the whole solar system."

"And that this is no accident? That the thing that caused your sun to become unstable is some sort of monstrous intelligence that has destroyed hundreds of suns in the past for its purposes?"

"Yes, I know; but what do you think its purpose is?"

"I don't know," she replied wearily. "Perhaps it feeds upon the energy, or needs the radiation. Our records don't tell

us—and we have never found out.”

“Perhaps you once knew.”

“Listen,” she said, “four thousand of your years ago this thing came into our system and killed our sun. Out of all the billions in that system, only we in this ship escaped. We’ve hunted this Thing through the universe; we’ve seen it destroy scores of suns and the civilizations on their planets. We’ve spent four thousand years, living for the day when we can finally close with it and destroy it.”

“It will do you no good,” he told her. “The radiant thing is only an agency; you’ll have to find its master and destroy him.”

“Then we will,” Gorta said. “We’ll find him and beat him to his knees and destroy him. No matter how many generations it takes, we’ll find our revenge for this thing destroying Home.”

“And *then* what will you do?” Joseph asked.

GORTA STARED at the man, “What do you mean?”

“After you have accom-

plished this, what will you and your children aboard this ship find to justify your continued existence?”

“I hadn’t thou...” she began and then stopped, feeling her face flush with anger. “We can face that when the time comes,” she snapped.

She returned to the bridge and reported to the Captain.

“The man is insane,” he said.

“Devious, at least,” she agreed. “He says that they knew this was about to happen, that it came to them.”

“How?”

“He was vague about it.”

“I say try narco-interrogation,” the Exec said.

“Let’s wait another hour.” Gorta urged. “Perhaps the scouts will find them.”

The Captain nodded, but not the Exec. “Now—we must do it now.”

“We will wait,” the Captain said firmly.

AT THE END of the hour, the reports from the far flung scouts were the same. No sign of life; only charred cities, the cracked beds of ancient

oceans, the glow-punctuated charcoal of dead forests.

And the flaming dawn-line was racing toward the ship, barely three hours away. Soon afterwards, they knew the sun would explode.

They left the bridge and descended to the dispensary on the fifth level. Gorta activated the door lock and they walked in.

"Where is he?" the Exec demanded.

"He's gone," said Gorta.

"Sound the alarm," the Captain said quietly.

"He must still be somewhere in the ship."

"He's in number three lock," the word came at length.

"I'll have somebody's head for this," the Captain roared.

"If he gets to one of the personnel anti-grav units stored in the lock," the Exec muttered, "we've lost him."

"Hurry," snapped the Captain.

"He can't know how to operate a unit."

"They're quite simple," Gorta reminded the Exec. "Don't depend on his not being able to puzzle out the controls."

WHEN THEY came finally to the hatch, leading to the lock, they found several of the ship's crew milling about the closed entrance.

"He's locked himself in," one of them said.

"The outer door is open." The Exec pointed to the warning light.

"Get on the intercom and talk some sense into his head," the Captain ordered.

Gorta ran to the intercom unit and switched it on. "Joseph," she called. "Joseph, can you hear me?"

"I can hear you," he replied.

"Come back. You can't leave the ship."

"Why should I stay?"

"You'll die out there."

"You might call it dying."

"Please. We can't leave you."

"It would be better if you stayed," he said thoughtfully. "You should have stayed at home those four thousand years ago."

"He's completely insane," the Exec whispered.

"No, not mad," Joseph's voice came back, "but I think I understand better what has happened than you. Those

many years ago, you rejected something that you thought was death—and you've condemned yourself to a lifetime of wandering and purposeless hatred."

"I won't listen to ravings," the Captain yelled. "You men, get a torch and melt down this door."

"**IT** WILL do you no good," Joseph said; "I will be gone in a few minutes. In the meantime, let me tell you a story. There's a legend upon Earth about a man who rejected Another who had come to this Earth to lead man to a higher plane of existence. This man mocked the Other, and some say that he struck Him; and for this he was cursed to wander the Earth forever. We knew him by a host of names. The Germans called him *ewige Jude*, the French *le Juif errant*, and in English he was always the Eternal Jew...the Wandering Jew."

"Don't listen to him," the Captain shouted.

"What parallel can you find between this and the wandering of the *Alathon*," the voice taunted. "What did your peo-

ple in their pride reject four thousand years ago?"

"It was purposeless destruction," the Captain said, pushing Gorta aside. "There was no reason. Is a God senseless and insane?"

"How far from here was Home?" the voice insisted.

"Two thousand light years. What difference does it make?"

"A great deal. The light must have reached us two thousand years ago, at the very moment that Other I told you about was born."

"Cut down the door," the Captain yelled. "You'll come with us and like it. We'll find this holy murderer of stars that you call God and destroy him the way he has destroyed so many others."

"This I doubt," the voice replied, and then, "Goodbye... unless you finally stop running and stay."

"Barbarian," the Exec said, looking ill.

"**WAIT**," THE Captain yelled, as the signal light near the hatch went out. When he pressed the release button, the hatch opened easi-

ly; inside, the airlock was quite empty.

"He's taken one of the anti-grav units."

"It's not too late; we'll bring him back."

"I'll go," Gorta said.

"This is a man's job."

"No, I'll go."

"Very well," the Captain replied tiredly, "though I wonder why we waste our time on a madman."

She went to number five lock, donned a heat suit, and took one of the small flyers. As she winged from the open lock, she wondered how he had managed to venture out into the broiling night heat. Without the heat suit, and the power broadcast from the flyer's power unit, she couldn't hope to last five minutes in the molten air. She scanned the viewplate, searching for his figure, but there was no sign of him.

She felt stunned. He was insane, of course, as the Captain had said. Only...where had the people of this planet gone? And what was the reason for this senseless destruction of sun after sun? Just to provide a symbol for a barbarian god being born on a backward plan-

et? No God, worthy of worship, would slaughter thousands of living creatures for such a blind purpose...

Only...he said that it had not been death. Was there something else? Something beyond?

Where had the billions of the Earth gone?

**S**HE SAW him then, climbing the mountain slowly, painfully. He must have rested at its base after leaving the ship and he was now trying to gain the crest. She brought the flyer in a low glide down to the plain and pushed out into the hot night. Her chronometer told her that it lacked barely an hour of dawn.

"Wait, wait," Gorta yelled and waved her hands. She wondered if he heard her. Barely an hour; she felt sudden panic at the thought. Overhead, she saw silver glints as the scouts returned to the mother ship.

He had stopped on the forward crest of the ragged hill. She activated the anti-grav unit built into the heat suit and felt herself soar into the night. In a second she was beside him.

"It's almost time," he said. *thou until I come,'* he was told."

"Do you want to stay?"

"Yes," Gorta said slowly,

"yes, I think so."

"You must be sure."

"Yes... I am sure."

"Come back," the radio at her belt said; "Gorta, come back. The sun is going. We can't wait."

"Go without me if you must."

THE GREAT ship seemed to shake itself and then it drifted upward from the plane. Flame blossomed from its drives and it arrowed for the lonely sky.

"Will they ever find an end to the search?" she asked.

"No—not until they stand and wait. The man in the story I told you was told that. 'Tarry

"Who was he?"

"I told you," Joseph said. "He had many names. However, he was known as Carthaphilus when he was finally christened; and after that he was known as Joseph of Arimathea."

She held to his arm tightly and said, "Joseph, I'm frightened."

"No need to be," he said. "The others have gone ahead and we need only wait awhile."

He smiled to himself.

"What's wrong?" Gorta asked as the sky in the east began to brighten fiercely.

"This time, when He comes," Joseph said, "I will bow my head."

### ***This planet could be colonized — IF!***

If a way were found to deal with pseudomus, the little creature whose bite brought death in twenty seconds. But there was another problem — the natives regarded a pregnant pseudomus as sacred!

*don't miss*

**THE EARTHQUAKE REMEDY**  
by T. H. Mathieu

*in the August issue of*

**FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION**



## FOURTH FACTOR

NOVELET

by Brian W. Aldiss

It stood to reason that no significant action could be taken until the situation had been considered thoroughly. And this strange request that they rescue her husband certainly indicated significant action...

THE STALLION moved slowly, as if aware he was nearing the end of his journey. Behind him lay the foothills of the mountains; behind him the sage, the shaggy wild lupin trees, the fetlock-high grasses. Now the ground was tame and planted. He walked beside a barley field; geese ambled reluctantly out of his path. The girl on his back was limp, one down-trailing arm swinging with his every movement.

She lay awkwardly across the jolting saddle, eyes half-shut, drinking in details of the settlement. Her horse carried her among the buildings now. They were all single-storied, with at least two sides of them built entirely of grass; none of them had gardens; what sort of people could so dislike privacy?

A number of cows wandered among the buildings and along the tracks. No doubt it was thanks to them she managed to get so far into the settlement without being noticed. Then a dark, authoritative man loomed before her, making soothing noises to her mount. She caught sight of a hand stormed with wiry black hair seizing the rein, and gently closed her eyes.

The stallion stopped and began to crop grass.

"Doctor Eileen!" the dark



man called. "Come and take a look here, will you?"

Footsteps approaching, light but definite.

"Anything to record, Doctor Saul?" asked an efficient female voice.

"There's a stranger here," the dark man addressed as Doctor Saul said. "Looks like she needs aid. Better help me get her off the horse."

"We can take her into Gavin's place," the woman assented. "I've got her legs."

**BY** NOW, other people had collected, watching or helping as the limp body was lowered from the saddle and carried into the nearby building which Doctor Saul had designated as 'Gavin's place'. Inside, the girl was placed gently on a low couch.

"I hope you don't mind a strange girl on your bed, Gavin," Doctor Eileen said. "Perhaps you'd better give me your reactions to the situation."

The voice that answered her was a young man's, hesitant yet eager.

"I don't mind, Doctor Eileen. I'm glad if it helps her—if she's in trouble, I mean. Apart from her hair being a bit mussed, she's very pretty. Attractive, you know. She's welcome to the bed."

"Couldn't you phrase your feelings more accurately than

that?" Doctor Eileen asked, a hint of frost in her tone. She sounded as if she had a pencil poised above a notebook: a sharp pencil.

"Oh, Sorry," Gavin said, pulling himself together. "What I meant to say was that, uh, my natural urge to be of assistance to anyone in trouble—I suppose she's got some sort of neurotic swoon on, huh?—is, uh, reinforced by the stimulus of her physical good looks."

"Better," Doctor Eileen approved. "In short, your altruism is mixed with sexual desire."

"I didn't say that! Did I, Doctor Saul?"

"Your personal doctor is the one best qualified to reveal your inner feelings," the Doctor answered gently. "Now I think we'd all best get outside and confer on this situation. There's little wrong with this young lady. Perhaps when we have come to a decision regarding her, she will have recovered consciousness."

"You, too, seem slightly perturbed about her, Doctor," remarked Doctor Eileen, as they moved away. "What is your ostensible reason for that?"

"She is a fugitive, Doctor Eileen, by the looks of things. Now her maladjustments are in our hands. If I

am perturbed at all it is only because I foresee an increase in our crop of significant situations."

Their voices faded as they went out, merging into the murmur of talk coming from the crowd outdoors.

**T**HE GIRL on Gavin's couch lay quite still, recalling in complete puzzlement the conversation she had just heard. Of course, she had been warned to look out for something odd... It had been all she could do to keep her eyes shut.

She opened them now.

With a shock, she found that, instead of the room's being empty, as she had expected, a young man with a mournful expression was sitting close by, regarding her. He leant forward with an elbow on a knee. Their eyes met. His pallor changed to a pale port wine color.

"Uh..." he said. He stood up and smiled diffidently. Perhaps he was twenty-three, her own age; only his complete lack of self-assurance made him look her junior.

*You must be Gavin, she thought. And you are still under the stimulus of my good looks.* But she kept her expression serious, fluttered her eyelids, and said drowsily, "Where am I?"

"Are you feeling better?"

the young man asked. "There's a mug of water here, if you feel up to taking a sip."

**H**E HELD it for her while she drank. It was good; she gasped with its coldness.

"Now I feel well enough to talk a little," she said. "My name's Dora; what's yours?"

"I'm Gavin Prouse. I— Oh, but I've just remembered." He became very agitated, and began to recite: "'A complete cure cannot develop without complete data. To possess data, the Doctor must be present at every significant situation.'"

"What does all that mean?" Dora asked, propping herself up on one elbow.

"Why, it's the basis of the whole treatment!" Gavin exclaimed. "It means I mustn't get into a significant situation with you; it would impede the analysis of my case. You mean to say you don't know that?"

"I can't quite grasp it," Dora said cautiously.

He smiled with relief at her, and radiance replaced the lost look. For a moment his face was frank and handsome.

"That's my trouble too," he said. "Eileen—my doctor—sometimes despairs of me. She says I oughtn't to marry Jean until I've a better grasp of basic principles."

Thrusting his hands in his pockets, he looked moodily through the glass wall behind the bed. Out in the sunshine, the conference was proceeding; Gavin detected Doctors Eileen and Saul among the crowd. It seemed to Dora, as she followed Gavin's gaze, an odd sort of conference. Short bursts of talk were punctuated by silences in which most of the crowd took out pencil and paper and made copious notes. This settlement qualified for a high nonsense rating altogether, as far as she was concerned.

Gavin caught the puzzlement on her face. Instinctively, he reached out and patted her hand—withdrawing it instantly as if it had been bitten.

"I'd better go and get someone to act as locum for me till Doctor Eileen comes back," he mumbled, cheeks red again, "—before this significant situation gets any more significant."

He galloped out of the room, pausing only at the door. "I'll be back," he said.

THERE WAS nothing in Gavin's room to hold Dora's attention: no ornament, no picture, no book; nor was she to see such things during her stay in the settle-

ment. The furniture of the room, reduced to a minimum, was obviously home-made, solid but without style. Only something which stood in one corner and looked like a filing cabinet seemed out of keeping with the generally spartan air.

She was ready to sleep; the uncomfortable ride, stomach down across the horse's back, had tired her. But just as she began to doze, Gavin returned with four other people.

They crowded round Dora's couch, staring at her with a wonderful mixture of eagerness, fear, curiosity and welcome. Two of them were women—one a matron, the other no older than Gavin—one was a girl of perhaps fifteen; and the fourth was a white-haired man in his sixties, whom Dora took to immediately because he resembled Gavin and had the same mild manner.

"I thought everyone was at the conference," Dora said finally, when it seemed as if nobody else was going to speak.

"Oh, the conference is only for Doctors and Doctors' doctors, naturally," Gavin replied, peering at her over the youngest girl's shoulder. "We're all patients; we don't confer."

"She's rather pretty," remarked the girl of Gavin's

age, in tones anything but commendatory.

"That remark ought to be writ down," the old man said. "It's a clue to your whole character, Jean, and Doctor Betty ought to have access to it."

THEY BEGAN fishing for notebooks and pencils.

*Ye Gods!*, Dora thought, *Patients is right—mental patients! Meanwhile, my patience is exhausted.* She sat up and said pointedly, "Gavin, don't you think you'd better introduce me to these—people?"

"Uh, of course," Gavin said guiltily. "I was forgetting. I wonder why? Better make a note to tell Doctor Eileen; forgetfulness generally masks something pretty serious."

"Just you mind you 'fess up, Gavin!" the youngest girl cried. "You just made a camouflaged plea of inadequacy, and you know it."

Gavin caught her by a skinny arm and dragged her in front of Dora. "This is my kid sister, Henrietta Prouse," he announced. "She's the bright one of the family. Very likely she won't be a patient."

"I'm gonna be a Doctor and find out more complexes than you ever dreamed of!" Henrietta shrilled, skipping out of Gavin's reach.

"And this is my, uh, mother. Mrs. Maud Prouse. Mother, Miss Dora James."

The matronly lady thrust out a hand and gripped Dora's tightly. Her eyes gleamed with militant good will, her chin jutted with benevolence.

"We hope you'll feel more than integrated while you're with us, Miss James," she said. "We welcome you to our familial conflict."

"Thank you, I'm sure. I'll try not to add to your troubles."

"Ah, a deliberate, I see," Mrs. Prouse boomed. "So glad, m'dear. I'm the immediate type. The assertion-depression balance between us should be excellent."

"And this," Gavin said—rather hurriedly, Dora thought, and wondered if that was significant—"is my trial fiancé, Jean."

HE PUSHED forward the girl who had spoken of Dora as pretty. Jean qualified for the description herself. She had a good figure and a delicate face in which any token of weakness was belied by her penetrating eyes. They seemed to be especially penetrating when they turned on Dora.

"Delighted," she said icily.

"Likewise," Dora agreed. She thought: there's something about that woman

makes me want to push her over a cliff. It's nothing personal; I just *know* she isn't good for poor Gavin.

"Uh, well," Gavin said, "Now we've all got to know each other—oh, sorry, Gramp! Almost forgot about you. Suppose Doctor Eileen ought to know about that too. Dora, this is my grandfather, Mark Prouse. Gramp, meet Dora."

The old man came closer to the bed and extended a hand. His face was brown and amiable looking, Dora thought, all the nicer for a few wrinkles.

"You don't need to worry about me," he said, winking companionably at the girl. "When a fellow's too old for a Doctor, he's pretty unimportant."

"You mean—you're cured?" Dora asked.

"No sir! I'm classified Incurable. Don't you know that when a man's fifty-five he's judged beyond the help of doctors? They let him alone then."

At this Dora laughed; then she saw from the expressions round her that Mark had intended no joke and she lapsed into an uncomfortable silence.

"No sir!" Mark repeated. "No one's ever heard of anyone being really properly cured."

The awkward pause extended itself again, and then sud-

denly they all began talking at once. Mrs. Prouse's voice overrode the others by sheer power of timbre, and even little Henrietta fell silent.

"You seem unconversant with our customs," she said to Dora. "Have you come a long way? Where is your settlement?"

"I must have been unconscious for some while before my horse carried me to your home," Dora said carefully. "I do live a long way away, on the other side of the mountains."

EYEBROWS shot up all round the bedside like a row of cats' backs arching.

"I have heard that only wild people without Treatment live on the other side of the mountains!" Mrs. Prouse exclaimed.

"Do *I* look wild?" Dora asked demurely.

"You look *dangerous*," Jean said, sotto voce.

"Did your horse run away with you, Dora?" Henrietta wanted to know. "Are you scared of it? What's its name?"

Relieved at this less dangerous trend in her interrogation, Dora said, "The sun was so strong it made me faint, because I had lost my hat. My horse is a stallion called Big Jim and he brought me here accidentally."

Henrietta screamed with delight and capered round the room.

"Caught you! Caught you!" she cried. "A stallion's a male sex symbol. Everyone knows that! So you must be *pretty* wild!"

## II

THE CONVERSATION remained at that prickly level for some while. With the exception of Jean's, their intentions to Dora were kind, but the only talk of which they seemed capable was an infinite series of probes, so that to chat with them was as comfortable as bouncing up and down on a bed of nails.

It was growing towards evening. Outside, the conference which had been steadily dwindling in numbers broke up. Doctor Saul went off in another direction, but Doctor Eileen came back into the house with two other men, one of them a stringy, harassed individual who kissed Mrs. Prouse.

"Good news!" Doctor Eileen cried to the room at large. "We have decided that Doctor Lloyd Akistar's sense of inadequacy is only a temporary anxiety-dictated behaviorism. When this is explained to him, he will feel better."

A babble of approval greeted this remark, which sounded totally irrelevant to Dora, now sitting on the edge of her couch. It evidently sounded the same to Gavin, for he said, with more edge to his voice than he generally used in addressing his Doctor, "And what did you decide about Dora?"

Doctor Eileen frowned. "We decided we would discuss the matter again in the morning. Dora can stay here tonight. You can sleep in the living room, Gavin."

She nodded civilly to Dora, came over to the bedside and felt her pulse. She was a strong girl of about thirty, without feminine grace. As she clutched Dora's wrist, she began a discussion with Mrs. Prouse and an ancient woman who had just hobbled in—the place was certainly getting crowded. Discussion (meaning procrastination) and herding together, Dora decided tiredly, were endemic in the settlement. Meanwhile, she was unable to hear what Gavin's group were saying, for Henrietta was importantly introducing her to the two men who had entered with Doctor Eileen.

DORA HAD decided she wanted to meet nobody else that day, but her female curiosity was aroused to find

that the stringy, harrassed man was not only married to Mrs. Prouse but was her Doctor as well.

"Sure, Doctor and patient often marry," Henrietta said, huffy at Dora's surprise. "They have to have an affinity to start with, so naturally they're drawn together. When I'm a Doctor and I've sucked all the secrets out of my patient's libido—bingo!—I'm gonna marry him faster 'n that!"

"Don't you let your mother hear you speak like that!" Doctor Prouse implored. He looked as if he spent his life imploring.

Ignoring him, Henrietta introduced the other man as Doctor Joe—"Mother's other Doctor. I suppose you know you got to have a second Doctor if you marry the first one, 'cos that makes him not impartial?"

"I'll take your word for it," Dora said. "And am I right in deducing that each Doctor has only one Patient at a time?"

"No, wrong," Henrietta said. "You can have up to three. Doctor Joe does Peter Paring as well as Mother, for instance. And Doctor Betty who does Jean does old Ginger Bradball and Ronnie Spears. You'll be telling me next you don't have Doctors beyond the mountains! Of

course, Doctor Saul is different—he's a Coordinate Doctor."

At this stage, to Dora's horror, some more people entered the house, including Doctor Saul. The babel was now intense, and still punctuated by note-taking. Dora felt like screaming—that should cause a few entries in their wretched little books. As she was considering this line of action, however, everyone began leaving the room; Mrs. Prouse was heard to announce that she would get supper, and at the words Dora realized how hungry she felt.

Only Gavin, lingering by the door, Doctor Eileen and Doctor Saul remained. The place looked deserted.

"Gavin's had a too exciting day, Doctor," Eileen said. "I'll take him into the other room and give him a Free Association; then I shall be ready for mine when you want me."

DOCTOR SAUL nodded absently and came over to Dora's bed as the others left. Big and capable, he looked more like a pioneer than a medical man. The smile on his large, dark face was full of understanding.

"I see you think us very strange," he said. "If you settle among us, you must get

used to our ways. Integration doesn't necessarily imply surrender of spirit."

"I don't want to settle. It was by accident I came here," she said. "As soon as I'm better I'll be off."

"We have fugitives here from time to time. They find us purely by accident, but they are content to stay and adjust. Gavin's grandfather, Mark, was a fugitive, I believe. When they see we hold the secret of health, they naturally wish to share it. Of course," he went on, "I am aware that the world is full of health settlements which think as we do, but these fugitives seem to find we manage the ethos of the Treatment just a little better than anyone else. How was it in your settlement?"

His quiet superiority nettled her. Ignoring his last feeler, Dora said, "I am surprised you have such knowledge of the outside world, Doctor Saul. Your people obviously aren't travelers, yet you appear to have no planes or radio or telephone or other forms of communication—not even a carrier pigeon."

Saul looked puzzled.

"I don't know what these things are you mention," he said. "The fugitives say the world is covered with health settlements like ours; it is obviously so, since the truth

of the Treatment is universal. There is another settlement two days' journey down the valley, and another three days' beyond that. But we want nothing of them, nor they of us. They have their own notes to take."

IT WAS growing dim in the room. Outside, cows and sheep were lying down to rest. Inside, the Doctor's face in the afterglow took on a massive grandeur, Stonehenge made flesh.

He rose and lit and pumped at a portable lamp until it burned steadily. It looked and smelt as if it ran on vegetable oil. While he bent over it, Dora said, "The life my people lead is different from yours. Can I ask you a basic question without being thought silly?"

"Go ahead."

"Just what is this Treatment of yours?"

Now the glass walls were no longer transparent, the lamp making them shine like polished ebony and shutting away the shadows of outdoors. Saul took a pace or two about the room, rubbing the back of his neck with his strong hands.

"The answer is partly what we call history," he said. "I don't know if you've heard of history—nobody goes much for it here—but it means any-



thing that happened before grandfather's time. Nowadays, the only diseases that exist are psychosomatic or purely mental. But in history there were purely physical diseases; there was one called cancer, I remember, and one called influenza, and a whole lot more we've forgotten ever existed. They were spread from person to person by tiny creatures called viruses. History must have been a horrible place in those days!"

**H**E PAUSED and shuddered, and began to fiddle with the lamp unnecessarily as he spoke.

"Fortunately for us, some of the doctors of those days—they weren't real doctors—killed off all these diseases. Two of the most famous of these doctors were called Sydenham and Pasteur; their history lasted a long time, but it was only after that that real strides were made. Disinfectant is to health what birth is to a man: the mere beginning. Desplansi, in a bit of history called Twenty First Century, originated the Treatment, which takes over where disinfectant leaves off.

"Desplansi went back to an idea originated a long while before—perhaps in the Nineteenth Century, I don't know—by a Greek called Hippocrates. He showed once and

for all that what we now call disease is merely non-treatment. His whole teaching was expressed in the slogan, 'Doctor, Disease and Patient: the name of this trio is Health.'"

Dora looked unenthusiastic. Saul came quickly over to her and took her hands. "You must see it," he said. "It's so beautifully simple: right living reduced to an equation. That's why everyone took it up. Doctors cannot treat diseases properly without a full knowledge of their patient's mental composition. For that they have to be with them all the time. Hence your trio: Doctor, disease and patient. It has banished the family as a basic unit of society. Medicine is, as it always should have been, a study of personality. The seat of disease is the mind—but the mind is perpetually under observation!"

His look of triumph was so intense that Dora hated to puncture it, but she could not resist one pin prick. "I see now," she said. "It means that your society is divided roughly half and half into doctor and patient. In other words, you've not got very far towards banishing disease, have you?"

Saul threw back his head and laughed. "Say rather we are only part way to Utopia," he replied. "Don't forget the

treatment took over a world one hundred per cent sick; everyone was neurotic in history. We've cut that figure by half."

**D**ESPITE his show of confidence, he seemed keen to avoid further discussion now he had said his piece. He patted Dora's shoulder in a paternal way and turned towards the door.

"No more talk tonight. You have years of interesting analysis ahead if you stay," he said. "I'll get your supper brought in."

"Wait!" she said, coming towards him, forgetting in her anxiety that she was supposed to be suffering from the effects of the sun. "I want to tell you about myself. I—need help. Don't you want to hear..."

"Not now," he said sternly. "In the morning we'll elect a Doctor for you—I may even take on your case myself, as Doctor Eileen is my only Patient at present. But till then you must wait; if you are to be integrated, an analysis must be made of all your self-revelations."

"I don't want to be integrated..." she began angrily. But Doctor Saul had gone. For a big man he had a good turn of speed.

She plonked her behind

furiously down on the bed. Lord! What a crowd they were! Even reasonable specimens like Saul were too smug to breathe. They cared nothing about her; why, they'd hardly asked her a single question about herself. They'd been too busy introducing each other and displaying themselves!

**H**ER ANGER had scarcely abated when Mrs. Prouse entered with her supper, for trailing behind her came her husband and her other doctor and his other patient, Peter Paring, whom Dora had not met and refused to meet now, and several other strangers all obviously linked in the glorious fellowship of disease. Happily they all trailed out again when Mrs. Prouse left. Happily, also, the food was good, if plain.

After she had eaten, she lay for a long while looking at the rough, unpainted ceiling. Then, abruptly, she blew the light out and tried to sleep. In the house, an endless mutter of talk went on. Her anger returned at the sound of it. Outside, bright moonlight was punctuated by the yellow oblongs of other houses. What sort of a community could so shun privacy? Dora could watch the people endlessly talking and writing. She got up, remem-

bering something, and peered into the cabinet she had noticed earlier. In the moonlight she could see it was, as she had suspected, a filing cabinet. Several of its drawers were full of notes. Here was Gavin's life history! Dearly she wished she had a match to put to it all, to set him free. There was something very likeable about him, if it was only his unhappiness! She closed the top drawer with a slam and returned to bed.

The talk in the house died away; the lights in the other houses dimmed one by one. All was silent. Dora's anger turned to loneliness: never had she been so isolated. Now the cenobitic rays of the moon looked too cruel to bear. She began to weep into her pillow.

"Uh, Dora . . ." It was a whisper by her side.

She could not answer. Gavin sat by her, and began helplessly to stroke her hair and her arms. Nestling against her, he muttered foolish words of comfort, until finally her tears died and she turned towards him. He was smiling now; his air of uncertainty had vanished.

"This is an awfully significant situation for you," Dora whispered, but without malice.

## III

NEXT MORNING, Dora woke early, though not before most of the settlement was up. A cock had been crowing outside her window half the night. Nevertheless, she felt capable of dealing with anything. For a start, she refused to remain in her room; they were not going to stop her seeing what went on.

Not that they had the slightest desire to stop her! On the contrary, directly she stepped into the fresh air, people made a point of showing her all they could.

She met Gavin's grandfather, Mark, sunning himself and sharpening a heavy saw. Dropping what he was doing, he greeted her eagerly. From then on, he was her official guide.

The settlement covered a lot of ground, chiefly because there were always at least fifty yards between each house. Frequently the distance was more, and then it was apparently reckoned as a field, because animals cropped there. Although this was all the clear result of a system, the impression it produced was one of haphazardness—but not uncharmingly so, Dora thought.

All the buildings, bar two, were dwelling houses. The

exceptions, fair-sized blocks, housed, in one, a paper factory and binder's and, in the other, a sort of general factory, where the chief manufactures were glass, pencils and carpenter's tools. Dora inspected everything with interest. Everyone impressed upon her how self-sufficient the settlement was, and it was only later she realized with what drastic simplification this self-sufficiency had been achieved.

**L**ITERATURE and music had died a natural death although, according to Mark, they 'sang sometimes'. Dora quizzed him on religion, but got only the vaguest of answers; he clearly did not know what she was talking about. The doctrine of disease of the mind had entirely supplanted that of original sin.

The whole system of technology had been scrapped. For instance, there was no canning of food; those foods which would not store naturally, or could not be pickled or salted, were just not available out of season. Communication, as Dora already knew, was out. There was no electricity. Schools, as such, had ceased to exist. Government seemed nebulous. The primitive economic system staggered along without money or banking.

"How do you manage to pay your doctor's bills?" Dora asked old Mark Prouse, interrupting a learned discourse on pig-breeding upon which he had just launched.

He ruffled his white hair in puzzlement, and then began an explanation which only slowly made sense to the girl. His historic sense was considerably less even than Saul's, which meant he lay wrong emphasis on the points he made.

One thing at least became clear. The Doctors came before the collapse of the old order, not vice versa. More and more people became Doctors; those that didn't, became patients. Being a patient took up almost as much time as being a doctor, under the new regime. The two professions swallowed all the others.

"They don't let you be ill in peace until you're fifty-five," Mark said, smiling. "Then you're declared Incurable and they let you finish your days in peace, and the Doctors finish *their* days training up another Doctor."

And that was the only system of schooling. At least, it ensured that the teachers were mature and experienced.

**S**OON AFTER the original cry for Doctors went up, insufficient talent was left for industry and commerce;

those spheres dwindled to critical level and disappeared painlessly as the new world of treatment emerged.

"You see, everyone was so keen on making a success of it," Mark said. "For once the world united in a cause. The poor folk in mental hospitals—we've done away with all those now—had to be left to their own devices: they were beyond the pale; but all the rest united for health."

So now there were no trades or professions left but medicine. The patients were non-specialist, turning their hands to anything.

"I've brought calves into the world many a time," Mark said. There was power in the sun's rays now, and he opened his shirt collar and straightened his back—partly in memory of young days, partly because he was conscious of the attractiveness of the girl by his side. "I've sawed down trees, and got 'em sized up into planks or pulped down into paper, and I've spun yarn and I've planted trees—and corn—and vegetables, and I built my own house when I was wed. Done everything round here, down to sweeping sheep's droppings. So's everyone else. It's a pretty full life—talking apart."

"And the doctors?" Dora wanted to know.

"It's about time we went to breakfast, young lady. You ask me so many questions I never knew I knew so many answers."

**B**UT AS THEY walked along, he explained that such maintenance or order as was required fell to the Doctors; in other words, they had to make all decisions in the settlements. The Doctors themselves had a sort of inner cabinet of five Coordinate Doctors, of whom Saul was one. It was this cabinet which decided whether a child at the age of sixteen should become a patient or a Doctor.

This task of governing was evidently considered a hard job by the patients, as was diagnosing and writing shorthand, which also fell to the Doctors' lot. In return for taking on these burdens—and of course for looking after their patients—the Doctors were absolved from other work.

"They're a lot of parasites!" Dora exclaimed.

"You mean those things on dogs? Course they're not! They have to look after us patients all their lives. It's such a terrible responsibility, that some of the Doctors have to have Doctors, like Doctor Eileen, for instance. Yes, it's the worst job of all, guarding the sick..."

"You're not sick, Mark! Nor's Gavin—nor any of the others!" Dora protested.

He let out a howl of injury.

"Me not sick!" he exclaimed. "My old Doctor carried away three chests full of notes when I was given up at fifty-five. Three chests full! I am a guaranteed perpetual pre-dyspeptic with any number of vulnerable foci in my stomach; and what's more, that's complicated by a dangerously high vegetable imbalance."

"Have you ever actually had a tummy ache?" Dora had to ask, for he looked a picture of fitness.

"Bless you, no! My old Doctor was too smart for that!"

He obviously thought he had out-argued her there.

MRS. PROUSE'S breakfast table seated fifteen, which was fortunate, because fifteen people sat down to breakfast round it. Some of them Dora had never seen before, including two brothers of Gavin's. She fell to wondering how such large families were compatible with so little privacy. Everybody greeted Dora cordially; the strangers were introduced to her and, if they were patients, told her the main features of their mental illnesses.

Casting an appealing eye round the room, Dora signalled to Gavin to sit next to her; but the young man had already been cornered by his fiancée, Jean, and his Doctor, Eileen. She took some comfort in observing that he was obviously in a state of rebellion against Eileen—and against Jean, if the latter's angry looks were any indication. Dora was forced to sit between Doctor Prouse and a taciturn woman with wrestler's shoulders who was at once a distant relation of Mrs. Prouse's and a near relation of Jean's (the settlement being relatively slight, relationships were slightly involved).

Despite her priming in the ways of this freak civilization, Dora found most of the talk round her incomprehensible, the Rabelasian frankness of Henrietta—whose young and piercing voice was audible above all other voices—always excepted. When the meal was over, they still sat and talked; the notebooks lying beside the plates were freely used.

From Dora's point of view, it all looked hopeless. Filled with a sudden rush of courage, she stood up. Somewhat to her surprise, they all stopped chattering and looked at her.

"**F**RRIENDS," she said, "You have all been very kind to me since I came here. But now I must appeal to you for help."

"What is the matter?" Doctor Saul asked at once. His natural air of authority would not have been amiss in a saner setting.

"You might have asked that yesterday, but none of you did," Dora said. "My horse brought me down here yesterday by accident; the heat of the sun made me faint. I was then on my way back to my own people to fetch help for a friend of mine. He and I were exploring in the mountains when his horse slipped on a rubble slope. He was pitched down into a ravine."

"Was he killed?" someone asked.

"No. By luck he fell onto a ledge about fifty feet down. A bush broke his fall; he was shaken but not seriously hurt. He has a water bottle with him but nothing else. There is no chance of climbing up or down.

"He has been there all night on that narrow ledge. He will die if he is not soon rescued. All I ask is two men to ride back with me with ropes and help pull him out."

They were silent round the table, looking at each other uneasily and avoiding her

eye. Dora could hardly grasp the unwillingness written on their faces. For a moment she pictured the rugged individualists among whom she lived, who would have jumped up straightaway to help a girl in a position like hers.

"He is my husband, not just a friend," she told them bitterly. "I'm not asking you much, am I?"

Gavin gave her one piercingly remorseful look and turned away. The others shuffled uneasily.

"Sit down, my girl," Doctor Saul said at length. "Unfortunately you don't know how much you are asking of us."

"I know how little I'm asking," she flashed.

"Yah! Old assertion—depression depressive!" Henrietta called. Her mother slapped her for it and four Doctors made a note of the exchange.

**I**GNORING the interruption, Saul rubbed the nape of his neck. It was the gesture Dora had seen last night; she wondered fleetingly whose job it was to take a note of that.

"We might be able to help," he said doubtfully. "How far is your husband into the mountains? That range is a pretty big place, I understand."

"We could get to him in an hour's riding from the foothills," Dora said impatiently.

"What is an 'hour'?" Doctor Eileen asked. It struck Dora like a blow that she had seen no clocks here. A calendar, yes. But no clocks. The subdivision of the day was something else they had jettisoned; naturally, this perpetual analysis business was too slow for any irrelevance such as minutes or hours.

"If two of you could leave with me at once, you'd be back here easily for sundown," she said.

"Leaving at once is quite out of the question," Saul said. Agreement echoed all round the table.

"Why?" Dora challenged. "A man's life is in danger. Does that mean nothing to you?"

Doctor Prouse placed his hand consolingly over hers. Unperturbed at her angry withdrawal, he said, "Young lady, you cannot understand because you do not understand our society. We must hold a conference first and decide what is best to be done. Meanwhile you have our every sympathy, believe me."

("Stop trying to paw her hand!" Mrs. Prouse interposed fiercely).

"Keep your sympathy!" Dora said. "While you sit

round this table conferring, my husband will die out there in the noonday sun."

"We must weigh carefully who will go," Saul told her. "Rest assured, we will find someone. Meanwhile, I must ask you to be as patient as possible—and to remember you are Doctor Prouse's guest, however reluctant."

"I'm sorry," Dora accepted the reproof.

GAVIN WAS standing up, pale but resolved. "I will go and help Dora James straightaway," he said.

There was an immediate flurry of protest. Genuine admiration for him flooded Dora's heart. She could guess something of the determination that gesture must have cost. Whenever she was about to despair of these people, one of them did something warm and human. But Gavin had caused an uproar; everyone seemed to be arguing and taking notes. Henrietta hooted with derision. After a struggle, Doctor Eileen and Jean pulled Gavin down into his seat again and the former said, "Have you completely lost your senses, Gavin? Have you forgotten the basic tenets of Treatment: 'To possess complete data, the Doctor must be present at any significant situation'? Don't you think dragging a man out of a hole is significant?"



Her scolding was drowned under the hullabaloo the others were making. But the noise died when old Mark Prouse rose in his place and said roughly the same thing as Gavin had done: "I'm willing to lend a hand straight away. I'm beyond the help of Doctors."

Dora smiled her thanks, but Saul said sternly, "You know the law as well as I do, Prouse. No Fifty-fiver may interfere at all in anyone else's life: an incurable cannot cure. Sit down and be quiet."

Then he turned to Dora and said, "Perhaps you would care to leave us while we discuss."

Reluctantly she rose. "Now I'm seeing what you're all really like, Doctor Saul," she said.

"Not at all," he said stiffly. "A situation like this, calling upon some of us to leave the settlement, has just never arisen before. You are an unfortunate random factor."

"Mind you make plenty of notes about it, then!" she snapped, leaving the room with a flounce of skirts.

#### IV

THE SUN climbed to its zenith, scorching the blue from the sky, and then slid gradually towards the west. An inevitable

feeling of despair overcame Dora James; she waited in Gavin's room almost without thought. She could do nothing but wait. Her future lay with the conversationalists in the next room.

Only once was her solitude broken. Henrietta, surprisingly enough, appeared with an immense hunk of cold pie on a plate.

"They're still jabbering!" she whispered conspiratorially to Dora. "I cleared off. I got hungry. I thought you might, be hungry too. Their trouble is they suffer from collective verbal fetisistic impulses or something."

"You're a funny girl," Dora said. "I thought you disliked me."

"Oh you know me," Henrietta said. "Little Miss Schizophrenia. Don't choke yourself on the pie with your wild mountain habits. 'Bye now!"

And she had gone.

THE PIE was tasty. When you looked impartially at these people, there was plenty of good in them; they were like people everywhere. If only this insane Treatment was not the be-all and end-all of their existence; yet even in that there was more than a grain of sense.

She gave it up and continued to wait. The next diversion occurred outside.

Slowly, from all corners of the settlement, men and women were coming to the Prouse home. In about half an hour, the whole population had gathered and stood talking and gesturing.

Impatiently, Dora turned her back on them.

It was late afternoon when five men came into her room. She sat up flushing, guiltily pushing back her hair, aware she had dozed off on Gavin's bed. Knocking on doors was another little adjunct of civilization which had died out here. The only one of the men she recognized was Saul; courteously, he introduced the others as his fellow Coordinate Doctors. They bowed to her.

"We are sorry if we have kept you in suspense," Saul said. "It is our unanimous decision that we should help you rescue your husband. We start at dawn tomorrow."

Torn between a desire to express the gratitude they obviously expected from her and a wish to grumble because they would not start at once, Dora confined herself to saying neutrally, "Who comes with me?"

"Everyone," Saul said.

He might as well have hit her. She floundered for a moment, and then could only echo, stupidly, "Everyone?"

"What else do you expect,

my dear girl?" a long haired man who had been introduced as Doctor Maycock said. "Obviously, it was all or none of us. Has Doctor Saul not already explained our way of life to you? Here, I am proud to say, we are all each other's keepers. To leave the settlement voluntarily is absolutely unheard of; it would produce goodness knows what repercussions in the psyche. Therefore, we must take what precautions we can. 'A complete cure cannot develop without complete data'. We are all coming tomorrow."

WHEN THE banners of dawn were red in the sky, the trek of the four thousand started. Their organization was most impressive; so tight-knit were they that every stage of preparation took only a minimum of time. Plenty of preparation had gone on in the dark hours: apart from Dora's Big Jim, the settlement possessed only twenty mounts—a term including a couple of donkeys—used for local haulage, so that the expedition would move on foot. An appropriate stock of refreshment and provisions had therefore to be carried.

Only a few of the more ancient Fifty-Fivers and a handful of babes-in-arms remained behind to keep an eye

on the farms. They stood helplessly in a thin line, waving good-bye.

It was an impressive sight. The people, for once almost silent, heading out for the foothills, their united footsteps creating an andante accompaniment. The sun, entangled in a net of cloud as it rose, splashing them with beige light. Dora was reminded of the migrations of the lemmings; these people were answering a call just as instinctive: the urge to help.

**T**O THE LOWEST hills was a distance of no more than eight miles. But their pace was slow, so that it was nearly noon before the first slopes were reached. At a signal from the five Coordinate Doctors, who trudged in front with Dora, men woman and children sat down where they were and made a light meal. Obviously they enjoyed the picnic, laughing and chattering and looking far too fit to need any sort of Treatment.

Dora, meanwhile, looked grimly up at the slopes above them.

"You are not eating," said Saul gently.

"No," Dora said. "I..."

"She's worried, of course," Henrietta said. "Who wouldn't be? She reckons the

buzzards may have got her husband by now. It's enough to give the lot of us the death-wish, I say!"

"Young lady, you are beginning to manifest typical aggression syndrome," Doctor Saul said severely. "Go and sit down before I place you under observation."

Dora said nothing. Henrietta faded quietly away.

The meal finished, they began to climb. The way rapidly grew steeper and more rugged. Trees were frequent enough to impede their progress without affording them sufficient shade. Heat reeled back off boulders, and they were all bathed in sweat.

"We're nearly there now," Dora said. Gavin had worked his way ahead of Doctor Eileen and was now close beside Dora. He gave her a reassuring smile, to which she was too anxious to respond. Now that they neared the end of their journey, her heart hammered painfully.

**THEY SCRAMBLED** together up a narrow fault between two formidable outcrops of rock, whose level tops formed a plateau. A helicopter stood on the plateau, a tent pitched beside it. Three men armed with light machine guns stood guarding the fault through which Dora

and Gavin now appeared, the rest of the party pressing close behind.

One of the three men, a magnificent brute in his early forties with a moustache eighteen inches across, waved his gun and shouted to Dora.

"Come no further! What's going on, Dora James? Some form of double-cross? We've been watching this mob ever since they left the township, What's the big idea?"

"I can explain it all Lew," Dora said wearily. "There's nothing to be afraid of."

"Afraid nothing!" one of the armed men shouted, "We just aim to start shooting at any minute, that's all. Have you gone mad?"

"Quiet, Fred," the moustached Lew said. "This rabble looks harmless enough. We said for you to bring two, Dora, not the whole population, you damn crazy little... Why, I've a good mind to..."

Suddenly he broke off into peals of laughter. As he laughed, he punched himself furiously in an effort to stop. He dropped his gun and clutched his sides. "She's brought the whole population!" he cried, going off into fresh convulsions. He finally managed to pull an angry face and say, "I may be laughing, but I'm damned angry all the same."

THE SETTLERS, meanwhile, urged from behind, were pressing up the fault. Doctor Saul appeared, digested the scene, and turned to Dora. His big face had its Stonehenge look back.

"Is this hilarious man your husband?" he asked.

She shook her head, avoiding his eyes, wondering why she felt so responsible to these people.

"I haven't got a husband," she said. "I got you out here under false pretenses. I'm not married and there's no one stuck on a ledge. I only wanted two of you to come, as you know. It was all a put-up job. I hadn't really got sunstroke and I came into your town with ulterior motives. I'm sorry, Doctor Saul, really."

"You're supposed to be explaining to *me*, not him," said Lew, who had now mastered his amusement and picked up his gun.

"You are both owed an explanation. These people are not the hopeless fools we took them for, Lew." She turned back to Saul and touched his arm. "Forgive the deception, if you can," she said. "We are one wing of the Regrowth Force. We're only small and ill-equipped—this is one of the very first helicopters we've got back into service—but we're growing. We believe the future de-

pend on our growth. We've just completed an air survey of the country, and it's covered with settlements like yours, just as you said. It means we—the Regrowth Force—have a lot to fight against.

"Or we *thought* we had. We figured man had stagnated enough, and it was time he was up and doing again. There are more important things in the world than cozy village life."

"So you came to spy on us to see what made us so cozy," Saul said. He put his hands in his pockets and sauntered to the edge of the rock, looking down upon his people, silent now and wondering. "And I suppose the two poor fellows you wanted to lure up here were to be shot, to let us know the outside world was creeping up on us?"

"We aren't that sort at all," Lew said angrily. "If you start calling us a lot of thugs there'll be trouble."

"Oh?" said Saul coldly. "You can't very well shoot *all* of us!"

HE WAS sounding Lew, testing him and through him the Regrowth Force; Dora, realizing this, sighed with relief when Lew, instead of indulging in further threats, simply muttered, "That's true; I suppose."

"The men weren't going to be shot," Dora said. "They were going to be told about some of the material and spiritual things you've completely lost; they were going to be sent back and told we should return in a year to check if any progress had been made towards recapturing those things our ancestors accepted as commonplace."

"And if we'd made no progress?" Saul prompted.

"If you hadn't," Lew said, "We'd have shown you some of the things we can do that you can't—blowing up a river bed, for instance. How else do you wake sleeping men?"

Saul rubbed the nape of his neck and said, "I see. You've got it all planned. Unfortunately you are wrong. Of course, I don't know what these things are we are supposed to have lost, but I do know we've managed without them, and I also know this. Progress reached its culmination in Desplansi's Treatment; when man has adjusted, he has no further to go."

"But that's where you are wrong!" Dora told him vehemently. "The whole scheme of your so-called Treatment is deadly plausible, but it panders to the sloth in man. It's cost you your souls and left you nothing but your

complexes. It's death, it's unscientific..."

"That's just what it's not," Saul contradicted. "It's the apotheosis of science, the merging of medicine, sociology and psychology. 'Doctor, Disease and Patient: the name of this trio is Health'—it took men thousands of years to arrive at that! It's the profoundest of all truths!"

DORA SHOOK her head. "It's only a half-truth, Saul. You only mention three contributory factors to health. There's also a fourth factor: the will to recover. You people have got too much on the ball even to wish to get better!"

"Hooray! Well said! Down with the invalids!" It was Henrietta, unable to keep quiet any longer. She burst from the crowd which had silently welled up onto the little plateau, and ran to Dora. "I can't even spit without being called maladjusted," she said; "I'm on your side, wild woman!"

Old Mark came out of the group and shambled across to his granddaughter. "In that case I reckon I'd better come and look after you for a few years, Henrietta. To hell with my vulnerable foci! I shouldn't mind living with

people who took me for an undiseased man."

As Dora caught their hands and smiled warmly at them, she saw Gavin in the crowd. In his eyes, she read the conflict surging through him. So, intercepting their glance, did Doctor Eileen.

"Gavin! You dare!" she threatened. It was enough. He broke away from her detaining hand and crossed to Dora. She opened her arms to him, unable to speak.

Close at his son's heels, unexpectedly, came stringy Doctor Prouse. "I've had about enough familial conflict," he mumbled glancing back at his wife. "Doctor or no Doctor, I opt out while the opting's good."

THROUGH the crowd, an electric murmur ran. It carried an overtone of hope. The idea of the settlement was disintegrating minute by minute, as others would after it.

"Put your weapons away, lads," Lew said to his two companions. "We won't be needing them. What we chiefly want is Welcome mats. Care to join us, Doctor Saul?"

But Doctor Saul was a proud man. He had to be won over before he capitulated.

"What I don't understand," he confessed later, as their

camp fires on the hillside made a barrier against the night, "Is how your ancestors managed to withstand the original, proselytizing force of the Treatment philosophy."

Dora chuckled, wrapping Gavin's arm more snugly round her.

"Mark supplied the answer to that, Saul. There was one place, by its very nature, where Desplansi's theory

could gain no ground: the old mental hospitals. Suddenly left to themselves, the patients had to fight their own way to recovery, intermarrying as they did so. Ever since then, they've been the sane and you've been the—oh, what's it matter now?"

"It's all past history. We're united now," Gavin said, and demonstrated what he meant.

Saul turned politely away to poke the fire. His notebooks burnt very slowly.

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## Inside Science Fiction

by Robert A. Madle

**HENRY KUTTNER** Dies of Heart Attack: Henry Kuttner, one of the most brilliant of science fiction writers, passed away in early February from a heart attack. The news stunned the science fiction world, for Kuttner was only in his early forties; he is survived by his wife and collaborator, C. L. Moore.

Henry—or "Hank"—as he was known to his many friends—was a science fiction and fantasy fan for many years before he sold his first story to *Weird Tales* in 1936 ("The Graveyard Rats").

Written in the tradition of his idol, H. P. Lovecraft, this story proved very popular and he sold many others to *Weird Tales*. Following Lovecraft's death in 1937, it almost seemed as if the master was reborn as the stories of Kuttner—and his associate, Robert Bloch—helped to carry the "Lovecraft Tradition" along.

In 1937 Kuttner made his first science fiction sale ("When the Earth Lived," *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, October). This, the first of many scores of science fiction yarns to come, was followed by the

"Hollywood on the Moon" series, also in TWS. In 1940 he married one of the most popular writers ever to write for *Weird Tales*—C. L. Moore—and from that time until his untimely death, just about everything emanating from the Kuttner domain was a collaboration. Together they wrote under numerous pseudonyms such as Laurence O'Donnell and C. H. Liddell; but the pseudonym they chose for their collaborations sold to *Astounding Science Fiction*—Lewis Padgett—became even more prominent than the names of Kuttner and Moore. As Lewis Padgett, they wrote such outstanding stories as "The Fairy Chessmen," "Tomorrow and Tomorrow," "Mimsy Were the Borogoves," and the "Gallo-way Gallegher" series.

Science fiction has lost one of its giants—one for whom there is no replacement in view.

### THE FANZINES

**TRIODE:** edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves. 15c for a sample from American Representative, Dale R. Smith, 3001 Kyle Avenue, Minneapolis, Minn. *Triode* is

one of Britain's leading fanzines. It averages forty pages per issue, is well mimeographed, well-illustrated, and contains an above-average assortment of diversified material each issue. Editor Bentcliffe, in his editorial, asks why there aren't many new fans entering fandom these days. He should have added the words, "in England" to his query, as the USA appears to be absorbing an average number of the "outer-circle" into the "inner-circle." Bentcliffe mentions several possible reasons. The first is the poor quality of science fiction films. We think that movies can be discounted almost entirely as breeding ground for science fiction fans. As a matter of fact, it is our firm conviction that the movies do not even create science fiction readers—nor does the Hollywood product affect, even slightly, the number of s-f readers.

Another reason cited is the lack of argumentative readers' columns in the professional magazines. Here Bentcliffe has a point—and a very sharp one, at that. Letter columns have always been the recruit-



ing areas for the seduction of the unwitting reader. (Fanzine review columns will necessarily have to be included in this respect, also.) Today, as Bentcliffe states, there are very few columns containing other than bouquets and even these are "lifeless, insipid, over-edited..." Today, two of the three acknowledged leaders in the field have no readers' column whatsoever, and the other (*As-tounding*) can hardly be termed a letter-column in the science fictional sense. There are a few worthwhile columns extant, however. *Future Science Fiction*, *Science Fiction Stories*...that is all, we suppose.

A very important reason for the lack of new blood in *English* fandom is the editorial policy pursued by a large number of British fan publishers. In many instances, they have become so immersed in their own private world of inner-circle fandom that they have lost, almost entirely, the basic reason for the existence of a science fiction fan magazine. It should be realized that when a general reader of s-f sends for a sample copy of a fanzine he

is expecting to receive something pertaining to *science fiction*. A certain portion of the magazine, *at least*, should be devoted to science fictional commentary, bibliography and or critical analysis of the field. Present company excepted, too many British fanzines are just plain *esoteric*.

In addition to the controversial editorial, Sid Birchby's short-story is recommended; also not to be overlooked are Dale R. Smith's article on the establishment of a kingdom of s-f fans, and the uncensored coverage of last year's Kettering Convention which, apparently, is somewhat akin to our own Midwestcon. *Triode* is recommended.

**SCIENCE FICTION**  
TIMES: A postal card from James V. Taurasi informs me, "Would appreciate it greatly if you'd announce that *Science Fiction Times* has a new address: *Science Fiction Times* is now published by Fantasy-Times, Inc. (name of company changed because Random House, Inc., didn't like "Fandom House, Inc.", as it sounded too much like their own

name). PO Box #184, Flushing 52, New York. We are still publishing twice-a-month, but now in photo-offset format, and still 10¢ a copy, \$2.00 per year. Our 1st, 1957, issue of *Science Fiction Yearbook* has completely sold out. Our 2nd annual volume, 1958 edition, should be ready around July, 1958; still in mimeo format, and will run about 100 or so pages—price not set as yet. This year, we plan a complete index, by magazines, authors, and story-titles, of the 1957 magazine output. Plus other added features, and a photo-offset cover by Emsh."

This is science fiction's newspaper—science fiction's *only* newspaper, as a matter of fact. SFT carries news about all facets of the field and, although professional magazine and book material is featured, there is something in SFT for everyone. Staff writers include Ray Van Houten and James V. Taurasi (the publishers) and Forrest J. Ackerman (films), Dick Ellington (fandom), Stephen J. Takacs (books),

Gerry de la Ree (book reviews) plus correspondents from all over the world. If you want to know what's what in the s-f field, get *Science Fiction Times*.

**I**N CLOSING, don't forget 1958's World Science Fiction Convention. A letter from the Convention Committee informs that the Guest of Honor will be the prominent young fantasy writer, Richard Matheson. Toastmaster at the banquet will be the editor of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Anthony Boucher. The dates of the convention are August 29 through September 1; the place will be the Hotel Alexandria in downtown Los Angeles. \$1 will enroll you as a member of the convention committee. For this nominal fee you will receive a membership card, all pre-convention publicity, plus a copy of the official program booklet. How can you lose? Send now to the Secretary: Rick Sneary, 2962 Santa Ana Street, Southgate 58, California.



# STAR WAYS

by

Joe L. Hensley



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In the early days of science fiction, the leading character might be an inventor and "scientist" who constructed his own spaceship, then took off for Mars or wherever. We know now that this idea is painfully naive — no one man can build a spaceship or carry the expense of space travel. And the expenses will be tremendous. But what will the relationship between private business and government be, when spacelines are set up? Here is a story of an all-too-possible danger confronting our hopes for interplanetary commerce.

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**T**HE INTERNAL Revenue Bureau was on the same floor as the courtroom. Samuel Allen III stopped with Allied's amended return before going on. The dour, uni-

formed clerk grimaced when he saw the size of the overpayment that Allied had made, and Sam grinned at him.

"We'll check this," the clerk said, wiping his hands down the

sides of his uniform. His was grey, with blue piping—not much different than C. I. D. uniforms—everyone had a distinctive uniform.

"Of course you'll check it," Sam said softly. He looked down at his chronograph. It was 8:30 a. m. on the morning of September 3, 1994. "But I can't wait—I'm due in court."

The lobby outside the courtroom was empty, but most of the seats inside were taken. Sam squeezed his own not-inconsiderable bulk into a place between a fat woman and a very fat man near the front of the court room. The Judge had not come in yet, but there was a rustling of papers at the front desks where all of the attorneys for the government sat—a whole bank of attorneys. Allied's one small lawyer looked lonely at the defense table. Sam looked at him curiously; the outward appearance of the man was not particularly rewarding.

Maybe Uncle John had already given up. It was something that private business did often, these days of government control of almost everything.

And then suddenly Sam was

on his feet with the rest of the courtroom and a bored bailiff was reading: "Oyez! Oyez! This Honorable Court..."

He lost the rest of it in watching the grey haired man in black robes who slowly made his way behind the bench and seated himself without once looking out at the packed room. Judge Blackman.

"...In the case of The United States versus Allied Rocketline," the bailiff read and sat down.

FOR A TINY moment there was silence and no movement; then two of the lawyers at the government table went to the bench and conversed in low tones with Judge Blackman. The Allied lawyer was slower in his approach, and Sam saw Blackman give him an impatient look out of the corner of a white-bushed eye.

"Oh damn," the fat woman next to Sam said. "They're continuing it." She leaned in front of Sam and spoke to the fat man. "What else is on tap this morning, George?"

The fat man grinned. "A narcotic's case," and the woman subsided.

It was true. The government lawyers were back at their table packing papers into oversized briefcases. Of all the speculators, Sam was the only one to leave.

He caught the little Allied lawyer in the hall and tapped him on the shoulder. "My name is Sam Allen," he said.

The eyes were piercing blue behind horn-rimmed spectacles. Sam guessed the lawyer at about forty years old. The mouth smiled, but the eyes did not. "Arthur Radden. Your Uncle spoke of you and said you would be down to watch and help. Glad to have you." He grimaced. "You can sit up with me tomorrow; make me feel a little less lonely."

"You continued?" Sam asked Radden.

"No, it was their motion, but I agreed to it for one day," Radden said. He looked at Sam, and his mind was somewhere else; he was not seeing Sam at all. "Would you like a cup of coffee?" the little lawyer asked laconically.

Sam nodded, disliking the man a bit for his lack of cordiality.

The restaurant was crowd-

ed. They had to stand for awhile before a table emptied. The waitress gave them an unfriendly look when they ordered only coffee, and tore out their coupons from the ration books before she served them—which embarrassed Sam, but seemed not to touch Radden at all.

"This isn't very serious is it?" Sam asked the lawyer, vaguely remembering something he had read in the paper. He picked up his hot coffee. "After all, it's just a \$10,000 fine for each count—and the company can well afford to pay that."

THE LAWYER grinned, and a little direction entered his eyes. "Not serious, eh? This is a government trial balloon. If they get convictions under the Kealing-MacKenzie Law, you'll get hit with all kinds of investigations and suits as soon as the judgement is in. The Justice Department is handling the prosecution here, but the Federal Trade Commission will want to get in on the party too—if they beat us." He gave Sam a somber look. "How'd you like to dedicate your pat-

ents to the public, or have the government take over your operations?"

"Now wait a minute," Sam said heavily, "they can't do that."

"You want to bet?" the lawyer asked. "Have you ever read the decisions under the Kealing-MacKenzie Act?" He smiled. "I guess not—you look too intelligent to be a lawyer. This country is damn close to socialism. The only outfit that can monopolize and restrain trade and get away with it is the government. Start making too much money, or make it tough for the competition, and two things can happen. You can be broken up into small, competing outfits; or, if it's in the public interest—and I use the words loosely—the government can take you over."

THE LAWYER shook his head. "Used to be a man could take whatever he was able to. *Laissez Faire* they called it. Then came Teddy Roosevelt and the Sherman Anti-Trust Law. That was over a hundred years ago, and Kealing-MacKenzie is Sherman a

hundred times tougher—with the joker thrown in of letting you have a jury trial. Allied Rocketlines is a monopoly. That was okay when you were losing money every year, but you're not doing that any more; you're running embarrassingly in the black. Once you start to make money, and you don't have appreciable competition, you're open to charges."

"But we've offered to license any patents that we have to any company that wants into the business, and we still haven't repaid our original investment."

"The government claims that such offers were not made in good faith." He waved an imperious hand as Sam started to protest. "I know that they were made in fairly good faith, and that your Uncle and Allied—at nominal cost—have licensed patents to any non-scheds that applied for them; and I know how much investment there remains to be cleared. But no large company is in competition with Allied. Last year you carried seventy-four per-cent of the passengers

to Mars, sixty-three to the Moon. Your freight percentage was a little smaller, but there's not as much money in freight. Your company is now highly successful," Radden said sarcastically, "therefore you are a monopoly."

"That's not a very fair way..." Sam began.

The lawyer cut him off. "Who cares about fairness."

"But surely a jury will see our side of the picture."

**R**ADDEN smiled. "There won't be any jury; I waived a jury. Just Judge Blackman."

"But—but, my God, man—didn't Blackman work for the Federal Trade Commission before he was appointed Federal Judge?"

"For eight years."

"Well then, how can you expect to get a fair trial out of him?"

Radden was silent for a long moment. "It would take me ten years to teach you. Let's just say that psychologically I struck a blow for our side when I waived the jury. And it will give the government less time to prepare—time they were

counting on." He looked at Sam coldly. "I also worked for the F. T. C. once and, believe it or not, my soul still belongs to me."

Sam looked back at the man dismally, distrusting him, disliking him for the cool, superior attitude he had assumed. There was really nothing he could say. His Uncle was sold and his Uncle *was* Allied.

Sam paid for the coffee.

**S**AM WENT back to his own small office in the Allied Rocketline Building. For the first time in a long while he regretted the choice he had made on leaving college—to come to work for his Uncle. Officially, now, he was a troubleshooter. Unofficially, and he accepted it philosophically, he was a flunkie to his Uncle and therefore subject to any whim that the old man had. But Uncle John seemed to be slipping.

*I'll quit*, Sam thought—and he knew immediately that he would not.

The lure was still there. Someday he would talk his Uncle into transferring him to Mars—or even to the moon.

That hope made it all worth waiting for.

"I'm space-happy," he said aloud. *That's right—you're space-happy and you can't be cured. You should have been cured when they kicked you out of pilot's training eight years ago. You should have been cured forever when they refused even to accept your application for civilian pilot training—because of your service wash-out. But that left Allied and one chance.*

ALLIED dredged the ore on the moon; Allied grew the medicinal herbs on Mars, and the succulent weeds that gave synthetic food a richness of taste that the billboards described as: "OSoGood." For any trade there must be re-trade. Allied was first, and Allied had developed the re-trade. The Rocketline was not ships alone—it was a "multi-headed monster," as the newspapers said.

After thirty-seven years, since the first exploratory flight, the government had started to send a few colonists out—whole families. *Thanks a lot.*

Allied. Better to be a groundling on Mars than a groundling on Earth. The stars are clear and clean when you see them from Mars—a pilot had told him that. Damn the law that made it impossible to book passage without showing a business reason—or military-government reason—the latter, of course, by far the most important. *Hah.*

So deep was he in troubled thought that his buzzer sounded twice before it roused him.

"Samuel?" his Uncle said. "Come in here."

"Yes sir." He flipped the switch back up. *My master's voice.*

HIS UNCLE was sitting in the straight-backed old chair that he refused to trade in. He did not look like a man that *Time* had called: "The sharpest financier of the age." The clothes were good, but wrinkled. His hair was bushy and uncombed above tired eyes that looked beaten now. The old man sat bent over a battered desk that was the scandal of the building, for a new desk could have come out of profits



—before taxes. This was the man who had put other men in space after the government had given up because of high cost and no return—*not good for the taxpayers, you know...*

The Allen motor—cheap and slow—especially cheap. And a “magnanimous” government had let him share in his own invention.

“Well?” the old man said.

“Well what?” Sam asked, knowing perfectly well what his Uncle wanted.

“What happened?”

Sam looked at his Uncle. The old face was set with worry lines. “It was continued until tomorrow.”

“Did he get away with no jury?”

Sam was surprised. “Yes.”

The old man’s face relaxed a little. “That’ll speed them up,” he muttered.

“Uh—Uncle John—don’t you think he needs some help? There were eight government lawyers and clerks there.”

“Sure he needs help.” The old man grinned. “That’s why I sent you down.”

“But I don’t know anything about law.”

“You know the people we deal with; you know the kind of terms we give them. You’ll know something about all of the witnesses that the government offers. Radden may need you.” The old man looked away from Sam and seemed to forget he was there—as he often did these days.

“Uncle John!” Sam said, calling him back to awareness. “How much are we paying him?”

“Nothing,” his Uncle murmured. “He’s the best there is, and we’re not paying him a cent in cash. If he wins, he’s coming in with the company in a special position.”

“Oh,” Sam said. He didn’t understand, but it really made no difference to him. He had asked the question to get his Uncle back from the brown world he fell into often now. A man couldn’t do things for money now—except tax money, but he could do them for the feel of power. Now even that was slipping away.

His Uncle’s head drooped back down. After awhile Sam tiptoed out.

"AM I IN time?" Sam breathlessly asked a technician.

"Sure, Mr. Allen." The man motioned with his hand. "Go on up."

Sam went up the stairs two at a time. Outside, he could hear the thunder of motors; but it was only the warm-up machines that pre-heated the tubes.

The glassed-in room offered a good view of the field. It was crowded now with minor technicians and office workers some of whom, like Sam, rarely missed a take-off. Sam nudged his way between two men and put all his attention on the field outside where the sleek ship lay waiting in its cradle. The warm-up machines were being pulled away and the sound was changing—not louder, but more shrill; the sleeping dragon of mythology come to life. And then the dragon was up, out of the cradle, in one surge of power. Tongues of flame and a wave of sudden wind kicked dust across the field. And faster the ship moved up—one piece of silvered metal outlined against the stars.

"Oh my God!" the man next to Sam whispered.

Then there was only a tiny bit of light growing smaller and smaller, while the sound waves reverberated through the building. And Sam felt older as another ship, another dragon, left without him.

He waited until the last speck of light had faded away. He turned. The man next to him had not moved. Sam went on to the stairs. He did not know whether to be surprised or not. The man next to him had been Arthur Radden.

THE FIRST government witness was Kenneth Laswell, one of the owners of the largest non-scheduled space-line. Sam knew him mostly as a dour, complaining telephone voice, having met him personally only once.

"When you dock on the moon, Mr. Laswell," the government lawyer intoned, "whose docking facilities do you use?"

"The Allied facilities."

"And if you have a breakdown who repairs your ship?"

"Allied," Laswell said, and then added: "If they're not

working on one of their own."

The government lawyer was pleased, but tried to keep it from showing in his voice. "Please, Mr. Laswell; answer only my questions. Now, Mr. Laswell, who do you deal with for cargoes on the Moon?"

"Sometimes Allied, sometimes the government."

"Who loads your cargo when you ship Allied material?"

"Allied."

"Mr. Laswell—how much money did you pay Allied last year for the use of its docking facilities and repairs."

Laswell fumbled in his pocket. "I have the total right here."

Sam saw Judge Blackman look up from behind the bench, as if waiting for an objection from Radden. But none came.

Laswell uncrumpled a piece of paper. "\$273,853," he said.

Then the questioning turned into a breakdown of that sum. How much for docking? How much for repairs? Parts? Loading?

**T**HE GOVERNMENT lawyer, probably emboldened by his success at evoking no

protest from Radden, asked: "Mr. Laswell, in your opinion, does Allied control of the facilities on the moon cost you a good part of your profit every year?"

Once again Blackman moved nervously behind the bench. Radden again did nothing.

"Yes sir."

"That will be all. Your witness," the government lawyer said to Radden.

Sam was disgusted. He sat tensely at the defense table while Radden got up. Those looks of Judge Blackman had been invitations to object; but Radden was too incompetent to even realize what was going on.

Radden's voice was soft and easy—a different voice than Sam remembered from yesterday.

"Your name is Kenneth Laswell?"

"Yes sir."

"You are an owner of United Rocketlines?"

"Yes."

"You stated that you paid Allied almost \$300,000 for the use of its Moon facilities last year?"

"That is correct."

"You paid them, for example, a flat \$500 every time you used their landing docks for landing and departure?"

"Yes."

THE VOICE lowered. "You're a rocket man, Mr. Laswell. How many times would you say that one of those dock cradles can be used before it has to be junked?"

"The maximum would be about a hundred times," Laswell said.

"Have you ever inquired into the cost of putting up your own docking facilities, Mr. Laswell?"

"Yes sir—I have. It was prohibitive."

"What would it have cost you?"

"A little more than \$50,000 a cradle."

"Is that about the same price that Allied pays for their cradles, plus the loss on shipping?"

Laswell saw the trap too late. "Yes."

"Objection!" bawled the government attorney. "Mr. Laswell can't be expected to know the cost of Allied's cradles."

Radden grinned humorlessly. "Mr. Laswell seems to—as does the government attorney. I'm wondering where they got that information."

Sam watched the government attorney redden.

"Overruled," Blackman said heavily.

"Now figure it out, Mr. Laswell," Radden continued, "that for \$500 a time you do damage to Allied's cradles which costs them at or over \$500 in maintenance. Is that not correct?"

Laswell squirmed in the witness chair. Radden turned his back on the man. For a tiny second he caught Sam's eyes and smiled. "No more questions," he said.

FOR FOUR more days, examination and introduction of documentary evidence went on. After that one acute questioning employed on Laswell, Radden seemed to content himself with routine, stodgy questions about the operations of the non-sched lines. Were they showing a profit? They were. Did Allied give favored treatment to Allied ships, so far as

repairs went? Most of the operators had to admit that they had experienced no such favored treatment.

Sam reasoned it out. It was really a fight of the little boys against the big boy who lived up the street. The smaller operators were not angry because the big boy *was* picking on them—they were worried because he *could* pick on them.

The Government presented graphs in evidence to show what percentage in trade Allied carried, and what percentage the smaller outfits carried. Radden countered by asking several of the operators if they were not carrying all of the loads and passengers that their capacity would allow. They were. But still the evidence was impressive that Allied was a big dog sharing its bone—a dog that could withdraw it at any time.

At lunch on the last day, the government was allowed to present evidence. Sam watched Radden pick at his food. "Worried?" he asked.

"No," the lawyer said and smiled quietly. "We're going to win—this time. I'm trying to

figure a way to keep them beat after this trial is over."

Sam wished he could be as sure as the lawyer.

"It used to be," the lawyer mused, "that trials like this took months. There'd be millions of words in a transcript of evidence. Thank God, that's been changed by limitations of evidence laws. Otherwise they'd just snow us under by sheer weight of evidence, by presenting *more* evidence on every point than we did. And that would ruin the impression I'm trying to create."

THE GOVERNMENT rested their case that afternoon. Radden presented only one witness—a certified public accountant who was in charge of the United States Income Tax Collections Bureau for that district. A number of graphs and cost reports, and income investigation reports, that Radden had subpoenaed were placed in evidence.

Radden rested Allied's case in less than three hours.

Judge Blackman set a date for the reading of his decision. Sam was almost sure it would

be for the government—the only thing which clouded this belief was the smile on Rad-den's face when they left the courtroom.

The decision was read.

Now they were back in the office of John Allen, who sat in his hard, old chair with a big glass of scotch and soda in his hand. The doctor had forbidden the old man a drink, but Sam wasn't going to say anything about it now.

For the most part, he was bewildered. How could a man win when he failed to take advantage of objecting to incompetent questions asked by his opponent? How could a man win with only one witness.

Uncle John beamed. "Well, it worked the way you said it would, Arthur."

The lawyer nodded. The tiny smile came. "Now I hope you take my advice and sell all of your subsidiary companies. That way, you may be able to stave off any more proceedings like these. And I'd like for you to make a really conscientious effort to interest someone else to enter into full-scale competi-

tion with you. If the government had had much more time, we'd have been dead ducks."

The old man nodded. "I realize it was a close call."

SAM SAID: "I still can't figure out how you beat them." He looked at the lawyer who was gravely watching him. "You waived a jury when the Judge was an ex-FTC man. You let them get in evidence that you could have kept out. You presented almost no evidence for our side." He shook his head. "And then you win. My God—if you'd really tried, you might have gotten them to turn over all the military installations on the Moon and Mars to Allied."

"That was hardly my intention, Sam," the lawyer said softly. "To be frank—when I took this case, I thought there was almost no chance to win it. And then I got to checking Allied records and saw just one chance." He grinned. "But first, before we get into that, do you know what percentage of jury cases are decided against a company accused of violating the Kealing-MacKenzie Law?"

"No," Sam said, and then added: "Sir."

"About ninety out of every hundred—much higher than the percentage of judge-decided cases. The reason, of course, is that a jury of ordinary people just aren't very lenient with big companies. For example: If you and I have a helio wreck, and it's my fault, a jury might give you \$10,000—if you're pretty well banged up and my insurance won't cover it. But if you cut your lip when a Trans-American Passenger Rocket lands, the jury will give you three or four times as much. A jury just can't sympathize with a big boy.

"I worked with Judge Blackman in the FTC, and I know that he's a fair man. The job he has now is his for life; he can't be removed, no matter how he decides a case."

"**A**S TO THE rest..." The lawyer stretched himself in the chair. "I'm not proud of it. It is ethical to do what I did, but it does not fit in with what my own conscience believes." He gave Sam a piercing look. "You know that you

overpaid the taxes last time?"

"Sure, I made out the claim and Uncle John had me take it down. We overestimated revenue and went over estimated cost."

"Well, then—listen to this: As I told you, there are two types of offenses under Kealing-MacKenzie, the second of which is most serious. There's a *ct u a l* monopolization—controlling more than your share of the business—and Allied is guilty as hell of that. The punishment is a fine, plus breaking up the offending company into competing units—if that is possible. It would be with Allied.

"The other offense is intending to monopolize, which is sort of like intending to murder *s o m e o n e*. The punishment there, if guilty, is for the government to take over the company and dedicate all its patents to the public, so that the directors will not have a chance to sin again. And, of course, the government lawyers will always charge both offenses and then forget the minor one if they think they can prove the major. And they thought they could. They had your old tax

return and under it you had a really fabulous return."

A little pain came into the lawyer's voice. "I hurried them; I had the trial date set ahead. I objected to any continuances of over one day. And when one lawyer faces eight and the eight claim they are unprepared—how does it sound? They had the evidence of intent from that erroneous tax return, and from what the other operators—who are afraid of you—told them. They thought that was enough. So they didn't bother with evidence on the first count; and because I could disprove the second, and didn't want evidence to come in on the first, I let them enter all the incompetent evidence on intent that they wanted to."

HE LOWERED his head. "Then I entered the second tax return—the corrected one. It showed that by United's, and the rest of the non-scheds own evidence, these companies made more profit than Allied did, as compared to base investment." The lawyer paused. "It showed that you sold your

parts and services on an actual cost basis—which, by the way, you've only been doing for the years since your Uncle engaged me as special counsel."

He smiled. "You're a wolf, John, and the days of wolves are over for awhile." He looked back at Sam. "Anyway, you can't prove actual *intent to monopolize* when you don't drive your competition to the wall, but instead let them make more profit than you do."

"I didn't like to do what I did; it is an unfair way to win a case." Radden stood up and laid his drink on the table. "I'll have sleepless nights because of it. But I believe that man won't ever make the stars on government wings—not to stay. Colonization and development runs years behind survey. But a private organization does business for one reason—to make a profit, and the man who makes the profit is the man who gets someplace first."

"We're ready for the stars now. Maybe Allied won't be the one to make it, but you'll help. The government doesn't experiment any longer—private business does, because they



have to find a way to make new profits. The only place for those profits is out there, and that is where we are going. Sooner or later, some company will develop a faster than light drive; the government never will.

UNCLE JOHN tinkled the ice in his glass. "I think we'll be able to pay your fee about the first of the year."

The lawyer's face brightened. "The sooner, the better."

The old man turned to Sam. "I'm sending him out to take care of turning over our trade companies on Mars to whoever we sell them to—make sure we

don't violate any rules and regulations."

Sam saw the same look in the lawyer's eyes that he had seen the night the dragon took off. A look he had seen mirrored in his own eyes whenever he thought of the frontiers out there—the frontiers that should and would expand. And he was glad for the lawyer—glad that the man's dream was coming true, because this man had guts enough to sacrifice one ideal for another. Sam was glad, without a trace of envy.

"I'm sending you with him," his Uncle said.



### Three Topnotch Mystery Tales

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# READIN' and WRITHIN'

BOOK REVIEWS by Calvin M. Knox & Jay Tyler

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OUT OF THIS WORLD,  
by Murray Leinster

BIG PLANET, by Jack  
Vance

TWICE IN TIME, by  
Manly Wade Wellman

THE INFINITE BRAIN,  
by Charles R. Long

ALIEN DUST, by E. C.  
Tubb

All published by Avalon  
Books, at \$2.75 each.

THERE ARE five more titles in the by-now-considerable list of Avalon Science Fiction titles—two by long-time practitioners of s-f, one each by exponents of the post-war American and British schools, and one by a complete newcomer.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Leinster entry, "*Out Of This World*", is by several parsecs the weakest of the lot. Lurking

behind the irrelevant title are four novelets originally published in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* circa 1947, dealing with the superscientific accomplishments of Bud Gregory, a Smoky Mountains hillbilly of formidable laziness—Gregory has an incredible intuitive grasp of science.

The original magazine series was template in structure—that is, each of the yarns followed the same general plot outline, instead of developing a continuous story line that evolved from one month to the next. (A good example of the latter, "evolutionary", series is the Asimov "Foundation" stories.) Little has been done to alter Leinster's template structure in the Avalon edition, except for the addition of minor connective tissue linking the episodes.

**B**ASICALLY, each story deals with a Menace—the first three atomic in nature, the last an attack from space. Dr. David Murfree of the Bureau of Standards seeks out the unwilling genius, Bud Gregory, and prods him into coming up with some miraculous device that heads off catastrophe.

There are many good Leinster touches in the scientific rationales for Gregory's "dinukuses"—but for once Leinster's inventiveness is outweighed by his repetitious plotting, molecule-deep characterization, and frequent tendency to lapse into a Mother Goose kind of narrative style. Much of the action is flatly unconvincing—particularly in the naively-handled section in which Bud Gregory single-handedly leads a demoralized America to victory in World War III. Perhaps this is one magazine series that should have been left interred; each novelet makes acceptable light reading by itself, as is expectable from such a veteran professional as Leinster—but the cumulative effect is on the underpowering side.

**W**HATEVER black marks Avalon might have earned for itself on the Leinster book are quickly wiped out by the other four titles in this group, luckily. One of the best Avalon selections so far has been Jack Vance's *"Big Planet"*, drawn from the pages of a 1952 *Startling Stories*—a sprawling, colorful, adventurous epic well worth the canonization of hard-cover binding.

Vance has had the happy inspiration of choosing as his background a planet eighty thousand miles in circumference, of low gravity, and thus Earthlike in all but size. His *Big Planet* has been colonized by various groups from Earth—a patchwork of curious civilizations, mutated through hundreds of years into nothing quite of Earth.

Nine Earthmen, an investigating committee, are shipwrecked on *Big Planet*—forty thousand miles from safety. What follows is a plot as old as Homer, and still full of life: the epic story of those nine Earthmen's trek across the face of *Big Planet*.

As told, the tale is one of wonders on every page: a sheer

triumph of imaginative storytelling. Vance has perhaps no equal in the art of creating sensuous images of alien worlds; his style—as individual a voice as there is in science fiction—is one of continual delight. One by one, the little party of Earthmen suffers diminution of its numbers as it passes through the myriad menaces of Big Planet. Faultlessly Vance conjures up marvelously compelling visions of fantasy in chapter after chapter.

IF THE story has a fault, it is that there is not enough of it. Big Planet is too wondrous a concept to waste on a mere 50,000 words; Vance might have prolonged the journey for four times its length with little loss of interest; and perhaps he might have produced a classic of the stature of the (immensely longer) Tolkien trilogy or Ed-dison's *"Worm Ouroboros"*.

The Avalon edition is slightly condensed, but the magazine version of 1952 raised the same objection: it seemed a segment of a far vaster work, rather than an entity in itself.

After all, barely a fraction of Big Planet's surface is depicted in the published story; this reader—and no doubt many others—most fervently would welcome a return visit to Big Planet, in order to find out what lies beyond the next hill. But we should be grateful for the slice of Big Planet Jack Vance has given us—for *"Big Planet"* is a gorgeously colorful adventure, only incidentally science fiction but a spellbinding yarn nonetheless.

ANOTHER example of fine storytelling is Manly Wade Wellman's *"Twice In Time"*, which Avalon has reprinted from *Startling Stories* of May 1940. *"Twice In Time"* is perhaps the first of the many science fiction stories which have sought to explain the enigma of Leonardo da Vinci by depicting him as a stranded time-traveler from the future. It's a feeble idea at best, bordering on intellectual irresponsibility; but Wellman succeeds with it because of the colorful qualities of his narrative.

The science fiction element in *"Twice In Time"* is slim.

Leo Thrasher, a 19-year-old art student studying in Italy, devises a "time reflector" with which he hopes to hurl himself back to Fifteenth Century Florence. He succeeds, arriving on schedule in the year 1470, but discovers immediately that for one thing he has landed in the midst of grave trouble, and for another he no longer remembers the details of his "time reflector", and is therefore permanently stranded.

WELLMAN proceeds to put young Leo through a series of swashbuckling adventures, generally keeping close to the known facts of da Vinci's life. He deviates occasionally, as when he invents an otherwise unknown six-year dungeon sentence for his hero; but the narrative moves swiftly and usually convincingly to its fine climax, the assassination of Giuliano de'Medici.

Perhaps the richest of Wellman's inventions is his villain, the suave and sinister Guaracco, who exploits the youthful Leonardo. As a novel of time travel, *"Twice In Time"* lags far behind its more ingenious

predecessors, Mark Twain's *"Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court"* and L. Sprague de Camp's *"Lest Darkness Fall"*. And, perhaps, Wellman's Leo Thrasher is not sufficiently complex a personality to have become the strange man we know as Leonardo da Vinci. But on its own terms *"Twice In Time"* is an agreeable and entertaining novel of pseudo-history.

ON PAGE 200 of Charles R. Long's *"The Infinite Brain"*, a character says, "It is hard to explain something you don't understand yourself"—and, clinging to that excellent maxim, I won't make any attempt to outline the plot, which is as description-defying a tangled web as any yet spun by that master of overcomplication, A. E. van Vogt. But briefly, the plot-elements are these: a tycoon, named Andrew Galeko, has blasted off for Venus in a privately-constructed spaceship on the eve of World War III. He awakes in a mysterious far-future world dominated by a communal mind—the Infinite Brain of the title—and simul-

taneously finds himself in several other places and/or times, with one final twist at the end that somehow pulls the entire story into shape.

The confusion is probably due to the fact that Long, whoever he is, is not a professional writer; he handles his material unsurely, developing promising scenes and letting them trail away into incoherence. But this very amateurism is responsible for the book's definite virtue: Long sees things through eyes fresh and uncluttered with habitual plot-devices. His descriptions of spaceship life are crisp and vivid; and time and again the muddy plotting gives way to a genuine vision of wonder. It's too bad that the book falls down on the technical level, since Long obviously has the ability to create suspenseful scenes and complex science-fictional images; as it stands it's a flawed but interesting book—worth investigating despite its imperfections.

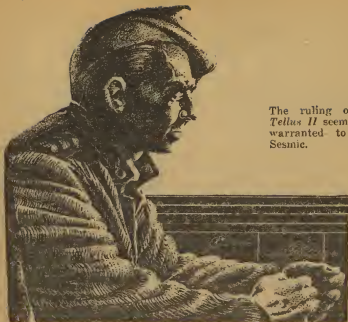
THE LAST of this group, "*Alien Dust*" by English science-fictionist E. C. Tubb, is the closest of all to pure

science-fiction. It's the detailed and doggedly tough-minded story of the first Mars colony, told in a realistic documentary style. "*Alien Dust*" is not really a novel at all—except in a broad sense of the word—since structurally it consists of a series of loosely-integrated episodes, scenes in the development of the colony over a period of thirty-five years. Not one of the original characters is still on stage by the book's close, and this tends to make the story-line fragmentary and diffuse.

But what does emerge, though, out of the half dozen interrelated stories Tubb tells, is a grim picture of the conquest of a world, against overwhelming odds. The book has some of the sweep of history, and Tubb's cool and precise prose paints a sharp picture of the Martian landscape.

Unfortunately, the fiction element of the book does not stand up as well as the science; in the earlier chapters particularly, characterization is at a bare minimum, though Tubb does show greater emotional insight into his pioneers later

[Turn To Page 111]



The ruling on the *Tellus II* seemed unwarranted to Len Sismic.

# THE OUTCASTS

by George H. Smith

What manner of plague  
could this ship be carrying that made her a  
**Flying Dutchman** of  
space?

**T**HE OLD rust-covered starship circled the planet Olympia in an orbit matching that of the Olympian Space Control Station. To Len Sismic, who stood looking out a port in the Director's office, it looked incredibly ancient. It looked more like a picture cut from the pages of a history

book and pasted against an artificial black background than a real ship just a few miles away.

"I can hardly believe it's real," he said turning toward Jackson Townly, Director of the Control Station. "I've never seen a ship that old."

"Neither had I, Len" Townly said, looking at his young assistant with a worried frown. "But I'm not surprised to see her. I had a message this morning from Asgard Control so I knew she was here in the system. But I didn't expect her quite this soon."

"Is there something wrong, sir? About that ship, I mean."

"Yes, Len," the older man said slowly, "I'm afraid there is. That's the *Tellus II* out there and in a short time we'll be receiving a message from her requesting permission to land...and we'll have to refuse that permission."

"Refuse? But, sir, that ship has been in space for years from the look of her. They must need supplies and the crew will need to feel solid earth beneath their feet and breathe something besides canned air. You don't know what it's like to..."

"I was a spaceman once myself, Len, so I do know what it's like," Townly said.

"Then why? I don't understand."

"THE *TELLUS II* is quarantined. She is not permitted to land on any civilized planet by order of the Galactic Council."

"You mean she has some infectious disease on board?"

"Yes. *The Tellus* carries one of the most virulent diseases known to man."

"Oh, then the quarantine is only temporary," Sismic said stepping to the radio-phone. "I'll call New Tulsa and have doctors and nurses..."

"Doctors and nurses wouldn't be of any use whatever," Townly said quietly.

"But there must be something we can do. They'll be going mad in there."

"When they call for permission to land, we'll grant them only orbital time for necessary repairs and for supplies and fuel to be taken aboard."

"Good God, sir, is that all! Is that all you're going to do for them?" Len was thinking of the long jumps he had made himself and of the longing that ate into a man's soul to see a blue sky, to breathe fresh air and to feel dirt beneath his feet.

"That's *all* we can do. Asgard Control refused them



permission for even that much."

"But why?"

"SIRIUS III permitted the *Tellus* to land five years ago and it is now a barren desert. That was the first time she had been permitted to set down in two hundred years and disaster immediately followed. She is a flying Dutchman of space and she'll go on wandering from planet to planet until she falls apart, just as the *Tellus I* did before her. Then her people will be given another ship and they and their descendants will go on searching the galaxy for someone to listen to them."

"I don't understand...I..."

"Perhaps it's just as well. The Galactic Council has good reason for the quarantine and we will carry it out. Or rather *you* will," the Director said glancing at the clock. "I'm due at the Planetary Council meeting in an hour. I don't like to saddle you with this, but if we expect to get our new appropriation I've got to be there."

"Yes, sir. I'll see that everything goes all right."

Director Townly looked out to where the *Tellus* lay, her rusted sides picked out by the light of Wolf 359, the sun of Asgard and Olympia. "I'll be back as soon as possi-

ble; but for the next two or three days, you're in full charge."

"Yes, sir. I'll do my best."

"I'm sure you will, Len, but remember that the policy of the Council in the matter of the *Tellus* isn't to be ignored or changed."

A FEW MINUTES after Townly's departure there was a knock on the door of the office and Len started up guiltily from the Director's chair as the radio operator entered.

"The Captain of the *Tellus* is on the visio, Mr. Sesmic, asking for the Director."

"The Director is planet-side," Len said, "I'll take it."

Four or five of the station's personnel were grouped around the spacephone in the radiator room. They had seen the ancient craft and their curiosity was aroused.

"Well, well, here's the Acting Director," Paul Norwich, the communications expert, said as Len entered. His heavy face wore a smile which was intended to mask his dislike.

Ignoring Norwich, Len seated himself in front of the visio. A tall, stiffly-erect man with closely cropped gray hair stared at him from the screen. He was dressed in brilliant but slightly shabby clothing of a type that was

unfamiliar to Len. Standing slightly behind the man were several other men and a girl. A tall, straight-limbed, short-haired girl in her early twenties.

"Are you *Mr. Sesmic*?" the gray-haired man asked briskly.

"Yes, I am," Len replied wondering at the emphasis on the word mister.

"We have requested permission to land and we would like to know why our request has been refused," the man said in ice-chip tones.

"Ah, yes, well..." Len couldn't take his eyes off the girl. She stared back at him, but there was nothing friendly in the stare. "It is the policy of the Galactic Council that the *Tellus* shall not be permitted to land on any civilized planet..."

There was a look of contempt on the *Tellus* captain's face. "What have the Galactic Council to do with it?"

Len listened to the bitter tirade, for a time, then broke in. "You will be permitted to orbit until necessary repairs are made. Food and fuel will be delivered to you on request."

The girl stepped in front of the captain quickly, and said, "Mr. Sesmic, I appeal to you as one human being to an-

other. We are in desperate need. We *must* make a planet fall. You see, we have twenty cases of space cafard aboard."

Len frowned. He knew; unless space cafard victims could have a few days on a planet, they'd become hopelessly and violently insane.

He didn't understand the Council policy, but he felt it was too harsh. What possible harm could a few hundred people do to a whole planet?

He turned to Norwich. "Set up a message for Tulsa Base. Tell them that the *Tellus II* has space cafard aboard, and that Acting Director Sesmic recommends lifting quarantine to permit planetfall."

Four hours later, the reply came:

PERMISSION GRANTED ON YOUR RECOMMENDATION. LANDING TO BE MADE ON CARSON'S ISLAND IN TYRON SEA ONLY. SUPPLIES AND GROUND PERSONNEL BEING DISPATCHED TO ISLAND. STAY IS TO BE FOR ONE WEEK ONLY. SPACE CAFARD VICTIMS WILL BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE SHIP BUT NO OTHERS. THESE WILL BE PLACED IN CARE OF DOCTORS AND

RETURNED TO SHIP AS SOON AS WELL. YOU WILL BE RELIEVED WHEN TOWNLY RETURNS AT 1300 AND WILL TAKE CHARGE OF ISLAND OPERATION. THIS IS YOUR BABY.

It was signed by Davidson, the Head of the Council.

At the appointed hour, Len Sismic and his two assistants, dressed in light clothing, walked up to the gangway of the *Tellus II*.

Captain Bolac stood at attention at the head of the gangplank to greet them. He was dressed even more brilliantly than before and, as Len had hoped, the dark-haired girl was beside him.

"Welcome, sir. It's good of you to visit us." The Captain raised one hand to his cap in a gesture which Sismic had never seen before. Since Len had put out his hand to shake hands at the same time there was a moment of confusion.

THE CAPTAIN recovered first and turning to the girl said, "This is my daughter, Lt. Katherine Bolac." The girl made the same puzzling gesture and the Captain turned to the other men of the welcoming committee and said proudly, "And this is our leader, Baron Kurt

Schuster." The Baron was even more straight-backed than the Captain and his hair was more closely cropped. He clicked his heels and bent from the waist, ignoring Len's outstretched hand.

"It's very decent of you to have us aboard, Captain Bolac, after the way we greeted you," Norwich said as they were led into the ship.

The girl's eyes flashed as she said, "For us it isn't a new kind of greeting. The curse of the Galactic Council has followed us everywhere."

The Captain nodded in agreement. "This ship has touched ground only half a dozen times in the last two hundred years."

"Of course, we have to follow instructions—but I can't understand the policy of the Council in this matter," Len said.

"We, sir," said the Baron, "are idealists, and the galaxy has no place for idealists anymore."

"We have arranged a little ceremony in your honor, Mr. Sismic," the Captain said. "Perhaps you will understand better after you have seen it."

"But first," Katherine said, "a cool drink for the gentlemen."

"But, of course," the Baron said, "it is so seldom we have guests. Shall we go to my quarters, gentlemen?"

THE BARON'S quarters were large and commodious even for a ship the size of the *Tellus*. Len sat in a comfortable chair in the drawing room of the suite with a glass of very good scotch in his hand and listened to the Baron and the Captain talking to Johnson and Norwich.

"We are never without credits to care for our needs. Any starship traveling between the systems can carry goods enough to make a profit. They let us trade," the Captain said bitterly. "They do not consider our goods to be contaminated."

Len looked up from the golden liquid in his glass into the violet blue eyes of Katherine Bolac. She returned his gaze so intently that he shifted his eyes to the hangings of the room. They were hung from sticks and embossed with a green planet set against a field of gold. He remembered vaguely of having read of such hangings. What was it they were called? Oh yes, flags. Their history went back at least to the twenty-first century. He wished that Olympia weren't such an out-of-the-way water planet. If he had been able to read more history, maybe he could understand the mystery of the *Tellus*.

"I don't know what we

would have done had we received treatment on Olympia such as we did on Asgard," the Captain went on.

"Don't you think it strange they wouldn't even let us pick up supplies, Mr. Sismic?" Katherine asked.

"It almost seemed that they were hiding something," the Baron said.

"Hiding something?" Sismic said and he and the other two Olympians looked at each other in puzzlement. "What do you mean? Why would they hide anything from you?"

THE BARON laughed condescendingly. "We weren't thinking of their hiding anything from us. We rather wondered if they weren't up to something that they didn't want you people to know about."

At mention of Asgard, Norwich's face had darkened and now he demanded, "Just what do you mean?"

The Baron turned to him quickly as though he had discovered some common ground for friendship. "I mean that ...well, just suppose the Asgardians had decided to occupy Miniver, the second planet of your sun..."

"What on earth for?" Johnson laughed. "It's a blasted hot box."

"Quiet," Norwich said. "I'm interested in this."

The Baron smiled and the Captain continued the discussion. "Suppose they had it in their minds to take over Miniver, and were gathering a fleet to do it. They wouldn't want a strange ship nosing around, now would they?"

"Take over? I don't understand the term," Len said. If, for some reason, the people of Asgard should decide they had a use for Miniver, they would simply apply to the Galactic Council for a charter for it."

"Ah..." the Baron broke in, "The Asgardians are non-human, are they not?"

**S**ESMIC was bewildered. "Not human? You mean are they biologically different than we are here on Olympia?"

"I mean they are not descended from the old stock, the secret stock of Mother Earth."

"No...no, they aren't. They originated someplace out near Sirius."

"Just as I thought," the Baron said triumphantly. "And the majority of the Galactic Council is composed of non-humans, is it not?"

"Say," Norwich exclaimed, "that's right. I never thought of it before."

Len straightened in his

chair as he said, "The Council is composed of twenty different intelligent species. I don't see what you're getting at."

"Nothing. Nothing, really. We were just wondering..."

The Baron was interrupted by a knock on the door; a young man entered, lifted his hand to his cap, and reported in a loud voice that the people were ready for the review.

"This," said the Baron, "is what we have been waiting for. This is what we want to show you gentlemen. Perhaps then you will understand us."

**A**S THEY rose, and followed the Baron into the passageway, Len managed to lag behind and fall in step with Katherine. He had been wanting to talk to her alone and this was his opportunity.

"What a strange life you must have led always living on a starship," he began. "Haven't you felt the lack of a normal life? Wouldn't you like a wider group of friends?"

"Perhaps I would have. Perhaps all of us would have if we didn't have a Cause. We have a purpose that you planet-bounds seem to lack," she replied with a proud smile.

"And what is this cause, this purpose?" he asked, amused at her attitude.

"The Cause of the *Tellus*,

the thing that they tried to eradicate forever from the human race when they sent the first *Tellus* to wandering in space three hundred years ago."

"Oh, and what is your part in this Cause?"

The girl threw back her shoulders with an almost unbelievable display of pride and vanity. "To bear children. To bear children for Terra! To bear warriors for the race. To bear the bravest and finest soldiers that every woman gave birth to!"

Len's mouth fell open in astonishment. "Soldiers? What are they?"

Katherine's lip curled. "They have made sheep out of you, haven't they? These people who rule you, now that your real leaders have been destroyed or exiled into space. You don't even know what soldiers are! No wonder the bugs rule you!"

Len didn't try to conceal his bewilderment. "Really, I don't understand..."

"Of course you don't understand. How could you understand what my people stand for? We are the only really alive members of the human race; we are the legitimate rulers. They thought they had us beaten three hundred years ago when they took over after the second interstellar war, when they

took our weapons away and condemned us to wander like van de Decken. But they couldn't take our ideals away. You'll see in a few minutes; we're almost to the assembly hall."

LEN STARED at her in amazement for her lovely face had become distorted as though some obnoxious creature had taken over her mind and was controlling her tongue. She was displaying hate, unreasoning hate. Personal antagonism he could understand for he and Norwich felt it for each other, but this...

"The fools didn't know what they were doing to the race when they took the politicians, the aristocrats, the military men and the propagandists—the elite, in other words, of every planet and exiled them into space." Her fingers were digging into his arm with her intensity. "And now look...they are ruled by aliens!"

She dropped her hand to her side and straightened her shoulders pridefully again. "But someday soon, they will call on us again. That is what we have waited for—we, and our fathers, and grandfathers before us. You'll see. It might even stir your tepid blood. We've remembered; we've preserved the flags, the

songs, the patriotisms, the hates. They've been handed down to us just as they existed in the good old days."

They entered what must have been the largest compartment of the ship and Len looked around with his brain in a whirl. What had he done? What had he let himself in for?

THERE WERE some five hundred people gathered in the hall, all of them lined up in rows and columns. When they caught sight of the Baron and the Captain they began to cheer. It was a systematic, angry cheering that seemed to come from their muscles rather than directly from their mouths. The Baron raised his hands and the cheering stopped instantly.

"We have guests, people of the *Tellus*. Sing for them," he commanded and as with one voice, the assembly began to sing.

*If I forget thee, O Terra,  
Forget thy hills, thy seas,  
Forget the Earth that bore me,  
Thy skies and towering trees,*

Katherine gripped Len's arm again. "Listen to that, listen! Have you ever heard anything like that before?

That's the song of Terra. The Space Legion sang that just before the Battle of Titan. Listen."

*If I forget thee, O Terra,  
My eyes too blind to see,  
If I forget the Homeworld,  
My lips too closed to speak,*

Captain Bolac and Norwich were talking in the background and Len could hear their whispers through the banal words of the song.

"I've never thought of it that way before," Norwich was saying. "If they were to take Miniver, they *would* have twice the living room that we have. They could outbreed us, and in twenty years they could overwhelm us."

"Not if you were armed," came the Captain's whisper, "Not if you had weapons."

THE SONG was ended now and the people below began to file past. First came the men, all in perfect lines, all stepping together and not ambling along as a group of Olympians would have.

"Those are men marching," the Baron said, his eyes shining. "Is this the first time you've ever seen men marching?"

"Yes, it is," Len said.

"Ah, so much, so very much the race has lost. So much that we could teach it. These

are the Patriot Veterans going by now. Naturally, they aren't really veterans; but they're the descendants of the original heroes, the group that was driven from Terra."

"What are those sticks over their shoulders?"

"Just sticks, *Mr. Sesmic*," the Baron replied, "but someday we'll have guns. When they exiled us, they denied us technicians and machines so we have no real weapons."

"Here come the Loyal Daughters," cried Katherine. She was shaking with excitement as the husky young women strode past. "Look how they're stepping out. They know this is a special day!"

"Splendid, don't you think," the Captain said to Johnson. "Does something to you, doesn't it?"

"They sure know how to keep together," Johnson said unenthusiastically.

"Here they come! Here come the 1st Storm Troop Regiment!" Katherine said ecstatically as fifty young men in black shirts and tan trousers, carrying clumsy looking spears, marched by with set faces and without a sideward glance.

"Uniforms!" Len said suddenly, "That's what they're wearing, uniforms. I remember now. I saw them in an old book I read."

"YES, YOU'RE right," Katherine told him with shining eyes. "Uniforms. There haven't been any uniforms for almost three hundred years. How dull it must have been." She looked at Len's tropical whites contemptuously. "How could a woman ever sleep with a man who never wore a uniform?"

His voice took on an edge as he told her, "Most of them don't seem to mind at all."

The girl was much too engrossed to even notice. "Look, now the Patriot Mothers are coming. Think of the sons they have borne. Look at their signs."

Close to a hundred women were marching past with grim, dedicated faces. Their eyes were focused on the banners that went before them. Many of them carried large, hand-lettered signs. They read:

DRIVE OUT THE ALIENS  
PLANETS FOR HUMANS.  
DEATH FOR BUG MEN.  
WOULD YOU WANT YOUR  
SISTER TO MARRY ONE  
OF THEM?  
ONE RACE, ONE CREED.  
TERRA FOREVER!  
DEATH. DEATH. KILL THE  
BUG MEN.  
KILL THE TRAITORS.

"Death? Kill?" Len's hand



went to his forehead. He was aware that Johnson had moved up to stand beside him and as he turned to him their glances met and he saw his own agony reflected in the other man's eyes.

"Splendid! Wonderful!" Katherine and the Baron beamed at each other. The Captain was talking earnestly to Norwich.

"THERE MUST be old books," Len heard him say, "And surely someone would be willing to make weapons for us."

"Those damn bugs! They're not going to get my wife!" Norwich grated.

"Of course they're not," Bolac soothed him. "Not if you and a few others are willing to stand up and fight."

"Oh look, look! The Boy Heroes!" Katherine was almost beside herself with excitement.

Very young boys in their early teens dressed all alike in tan pants and shirts marched by carrying banners which closely resembled those of the Patriot Mothers. They said:

NO AGREEMENTS WITH  
BUG MEN  
FIGHT, DON'T TALK!  
GIVE US THE WEAPONS

## AND WE'LL DO THE FIGHTING!

Right behind them came the Girl Mothers. Len looked away as the swollen-stomached, carefully-walking girls went by.

"Everyone of them is carrying a fighting man!" Katherine said, her voice tight with pride.

The girls began shouting in dedicated, fanatic voices. "Fight!" "War!" "Down with the aliens!" "*Terra Forever!*"

Len's head was whirling. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. There was nothing in his past experience with which to connect or interpret the almost holy light in the eyes of the *Tellus* passengers. The hysterical yelling had an almost hypnotic effect.

Norwich was yelling with the rest. "*Tellus. Tellus! TELLUS. TELLUS!*"

JOHNSON was still beside him and now he whispered. "Sir, what are we going to do? This ship is a traveling madhouse. The people aboard are insane."

"Yes, they are. You're right. I'll make some excuse to leave," Len told him. "We have to get out of here."

"Now," the Baron was saying, "surely you can see in

what direction the future of the human race lies. This is the first time we have been allowed to land on a planet since the unfortunate business on Sirius III. The fools didn't understand our message and started fighting among themselves, rather than attacking the aliens."

"You mean that what happened on Sirius III was the result of letting the *Tellus* land," Len asked.

"Indirectly, perhaps," the Baron admitted. "They didn't understand; they accepted our doctrines but didn't take us for their leaders—we, who are the natural leaders of all mankind."

"Sirius III is a barren radioactive desert now," Johnson said quietly. "I was there during my training days."

"I know," Len said to him. A heavy burden of guilt was settling on him. He had to act fast, very fast.

Turning to the Captain he said, "This has all been most interesting, but..."

"Interesting? It's wonderful!" Norwich interrupted.

THE CAPTAIN and Katherine smiled, and the Baron's pride glowed in his eyes. "We are glad that you understand. We've spent so many weary years, years in which no one appreciated

what we and our forefathers stood for."

"In fact, it's so very wonderful," Len went on, "That I think I should report to the Supreme Council at once."

The three visitors to Olympia smiled but Norwich said skeptically, "I don't trust the Council; they may have sold out to the Asgardians."

The smile on the Baron's face faded as he said, "We will make our radio available to you at once, and you can make your report from our ship. In the meantime, you and your friends must accept our hospitality."

"Thank you for the kindness of your offer," Len said with a side glance at Johnson and Norwich, "But my report to the Council must be made in person. The Council does not approve of visi-reports on subjects of this importance."

"That isn't true," Norwich said angrily. "And you know that it isn't. What the hell are you trying to pull, Sesmic?"

"Norwich, be quiet!" Len snapped.

"I know you, Sesmic. You're up to something; you weren't impressed. Neither you nor Johnson are capable of seeing the danger from the Asgard. My brother was killed on Asgard. They said it was an accident but now I know..."

Len tried to quiet the other man but the Baron and the others were watching them closely.

"I THINK I understand," the Baron said at last, "but you're not going to ruin this. We're too close this time. Our agents are already at work among the island people and soon they'll be off the island and spreading the word all over Olympia about the danger from the Asgardians. And about the stupid blindness and treachery of the leaders of Olympia."

Len took a step forward with Johnson right at his heels. "I'm leaving this ship; you have no right to stop me."

"This is my right," the Baron said, drawing a small tube from his belt. He pointed it at the deck near Len's feet and as a stream of light from it hit the metal, it burned a neat, little round hole in it.

"This is also something you didn't know, Mr. Sesmic. We do have weapons. Not many, it is true, but a few. This one was converted from an atomic drill we picked up in our wanderings. It's really very effective. It could burn a hole in your head as well as in the deck."

At this threat of violence both Sesmic and Johnson turned pale. Len took a step backward, staring at the

Baron as a mouse might stare at a cobra. "You wouldn't... you couldn't... turn that on a fellow man."

"Wouldn't I, though," the Baron laughed. "Just give me any trouble and I'll be only too glad to."

"What... what do you want me to do?" Len asked, swallowing with difficulty.

"I want you to go to the visiphone and call your Supreme Council and tell them the truth about us."

"The truth?" Len asked, hardly able to believe what he heard.

"But of course. You don't think we're going to let you off the ship to lie about us, do you?"

LEN KNEW then that the man was insane, that all of those aboard the *Tellus II* were insane—but with a type of insanity that could spread.

"Sure," he said easily, "I'll tell the truth about you. Take me to your radioroom."

"Mr. Sesmic, Mr. Sesmic," Johnson protested, "you don't know what you're doing."

In a few minutes, the Supreme Council of Olympia had been contacted and Len was facing one of its committees and Jackson Townly, his Chief.

"I am in the radioroom of the *Tellus III*," he told them. "I have visited the people of

this ship, and they have requested that I tell you the truth about them."

The expression on the faces of the councilmen ran the gamut from mild surprise to astonishment. "I am not going to tell any lies about these valiant people," Len went on, "because they have asked me not to."

"Yes, of course," the head of the committee said. "Go on, we are listening."

Len Sesmic went on. He told in detail what he had seen. He told about the marching men, women and children, about the songs, the flags, the signs and the screamed slogans.

"**A**ND THESE," he concluded, "are the people who have been exiled from the planets for the past three hundred years. These are the people who now come to us with a plan. They offer themselves as leaders in an attack on the planet Asgard. They offer a return to the old ways of mankind. They ask us to build weapons and follow them in a crusade to wipe all alien life from the galaxy. It is up to the Council to..."

"That is enough," the Baron said, cutting out the screen. "You have told the truth about us and that is what we wanted. The people of Olympia will hear the

truth...and the truth will make them free."

"The people of Olympia are free. Free and sane. As the people of the galaxy are free and sane," Len said.

"You are a fool, Mr. Sesmic, a cowardly fool," the Baron said. "Take him from my sight. Put him off the ship with his friends. He sickens me."

Guards stepped forward and started to shove them toward the gangplank as Norwich shouted, "Wait! I'm with you. I think we ought to blast the Asgardians."

The Baron dismissed him with a careless wave. "You may return when the people of your planet join us in their millions. We have no time for you now; we have great plans to make."

Police helios were already beginning to land about the field as the three were escorted from the *Tellus II*. Men ran toward the ship from all directions.

**L**EN STRODE forward to meet them. It was the result he had expected. The Council had gone into action at once as soon as they heard his insane speech. His career was probably ruined, but he had at least made up for his original error in permitting the ship to land.

"Close the hatches!" he

shouted to the approaching men. Permit no one to leave or enter the ship."

A police inspector hurried up to him. "Mr. Townly sends his regards, Mr. Sesmic. He says you know the situation, and for us to report to you for orders."

Len grinned for the first time since he entered the out-cast ship. Townly and the Council had understood! But then, who wouldn't have? Who but mad men would think to take such things as war and conquest seriously?

"Cut off all supplies to the *Tellus*," he ordered, "and get your men to work rounding up agents from the ship who

have gotten through to the island. I want the whole island quarantined at once."

"Quarantined?" the inspector said, looking puzzled.

"Yes, man, yes!" Len shouted. He looked at the crest-fallen Norwich and wondered about the men he had seen fraternizing with the *Tellus*' crew. "This island and every-one on it has been exposed to a deadly, virulent disease. A disease that can wipe out whole worlds!"

"Disease, sir?" the Inspector said looking worried. "What disease?"

"A disease for which Man has even forgotten the name," Len replied.

## Coming In Future Science Fiction

Vor Nollig, the Blue; Vor Nollig, the female Pogath; Vor Nollig, the Chief Diplomat of Pogathon — dead, with a common carving knife plunged into her abdomen and her alien blood all over the floor of the room in which she had slept the night before...

And Felicity, the cat, dead — its head burned off. Why kill a harmless pet?

*Here is a startling new mystery novelet by the author of "The Shrouded Planet", and the "Father Riley" stories. You don't want to miss.*

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## CADUCEUS WILD

by Ward Moore & Robert Bradford

coming soon in this magazine — watch for it!

# READIN' and WRITHIN'

(continued from page 94)

on. None the less, several of the individual episodes are outstandingly handled, particularly the bitter little scene depicting the return of a Martian "hero" to Earth. It's a solid and entertaining book, all in all.

A note on the Avalon line in general: these are handsome books, well printed and bound, and attractively cased in plastic jacket-protectors. They make worthwhile additions to the science-fiction fan's library; and in a time of publishing uncertainty, it's refreshing to see a publishing company issuing science-fiction titles with this sort of regularity. It's an enterprise that ought to be supported. C. M. K.

**THE SHROUDED PLANET** by Robert Randall; Gnome Press, 1957; 188 pp; \$3.00.

"Robert Randall" is, of course, Robert Silverberg and Randall Garrett, who first ap-

peared in *Science Fiction Quarterly*, with the initial story of the "Father Riley" series, "No Future In This". Their second series, the Nidorian tales, began shortly afterward in *Astounding Science Fiction*. And the present book contains the first three stories of the latter series. "The Chosen People", "Promised Land", and "False Prophet"—slightly revised to achieve better continuity—and with new introductory and bridge material.

It will doubtless be said that this ("The Shrouded Planet") isn't really a novel in its own right—very well, let's admit the fact and get on to the more important business. Science fiction readers ought to be used to this sort of thing by now, so the main questions are (a) is it good reading? (b) has the book anything that the magazine versions didn't have? (c) if so, does the additional material make enough of a difference to recommend it to those who own, or have read,

the magazines in question? My answer to all three questions would be "yes".

Although it can very well be argued that these stories amount to social satire, rather than science fiction, the careful organization of the background and convincing inner logic make them good reading. The introductory tale and the bridge passages—though short—add a good deal, and the result is a single unit that hangs together.

I've read complaints to the effect that the system of names makes it difficult to keep track of the characters. Granted, it is somewhat complex, and does require a bit of concentration on the reader's

part. But the demand is not excessive, nor does it strike me as being disproportionate to the reward involved.

This sounds as if I'm making the book out to be outstanding literature. It isn't, nor was it intended as such. It was intended to be intelligent entertainment, with more than a little beneath the smooth surface, and I would say that the two-headed author achieved his collective aim. And finally, those who have complained that the Nidorians don't seem to be very bright have missed the point which makes the book a little more than light reading. Considering what is offered in many instances for \$3.00, this volume is a better buy than usual. *J. T.*

### **Wanted — Still More Votes!**

You know how it is — when you see a good thing, you want more of it! You've pronounced some of the things we've been doing, some of the stories we've been offering you, very good. Fine. We want to give you more of the same — but we also want to hear from still more of you, want to be swamped with letters and coupons and postal cards. Then our reports in "The Reckoning" will begin to show what a really representative sample of you thought. So . . . how about sending us your vote today — huh?





## The Last Word

*(Yours, of course, Gentle Reader)*

### FOR THE DEFENSE

Dear Sir:

In the March, 1958, issue of your publication there is a longish letter from a Mr. F. W. Zwicky, with your reply. In that reply you make some comments about librarians—just comments, on the whole, I must admit. But I should like to rise to the defense of such people!

Being a librarian, I know only too well how omniscient we are supposed to be! Our public expects us to know the answer to any question—and along with that, to know the exact classification of any book. I wish we were that good. But not one of us can hope to be expert or even knowledgeable in every field. Science Fiction and its sister field fantasy meet rather special interests; most librarians are amiable enough about trying to meet special interests on the part of the borrowing public—but, dear me, why shouldn't librarians become confused about these special fields? The bulk of the science fiction borrowing field is young; older readers are usually less noisy about their interest—probably a hangover from the early

days when the field was suspect.

Secondly, one part of our professional aim is to provide the right kind of reading material for each age level—so we HAVE to consider every science fiction novel or short story from that point of view. The librarian who has no taste for the field stops there. Those of us who are among your supporters do not, I can assure you. While we may mark a Heinlein as “juvenile”, it goes on a shelf where all ages can find it—and we encourage the readers to pay no attention to the juvenile tag. Yet when we are leading a young mind along the path to reading for pleasure, WE use the tag to know what to give that mind; it is worse than useless asking or expecting age 8 to read what 48 will read with pleasure.

I do get a chuckle out of all the to-do over “Literature”. If you could see what some people read! Only time will mark what is great; I do not see why we should be too much concerned NOW with whether or not a given title will be considered great literature by some future generation. This carrying a chip on the shoulder about science-fiction is damaging to the position of the field; probably that is simply because the readers in the field are most-

ly young—and ready to fight for their enthusiasms. I find that I convince more people of the values of science fiction by my being surprised they don't see them than I do by laying down any laws. I read everything I can lay my hands on but I also read many other kinds of books; it is the limited-to-SF reader who weakens the position of SF. My advice to those who admit love of SF but are shy about it lest they be teased is: don't battle about it, don't be ashamed of your interest. If a magazine cover IS lurid—so it is lurid; say so and laugh first. If you are challenged with reading “escape literature”, remind your challenger gently that most literature is an escape from or to something, SF can't be everyone's meat; to many it will always seem an eccentricity. A quiet sorrow that the other fellow doesn't enjoy this so obviously enjoyable to you goes a long way to showing him you have something that IS a pleasure. This isn't being on the defensive; it is taking the offensive without being offensive about it!

You might be interested to note that—at least in our library—we find the controversial generally well-accepted. The most amusing result of the library's recognition that most library borrowers are

NOT afraid of the controversial is that now some of the more provocative SF novels are not being tagged as SF; they are put where the general reader finds them and discovers their value without a preconceived notion about SF. If I had MY way, we'd have no special marking or shelving of SF, mysteries or westerns; too often the distinction is meaningless.

Good luck to your magazine and to all SF publishers! I can't buy or subscribe to EVERYTHING, but I do the best I can.

*Mrs. Dana T. Warren,*  
115 W. Linda Mesa,  
Danville, Calif.

The to-do over "Literature" does bring a chuckle now and then, even though it has its serious aspects. My own position has been to try to show that to claim that science fiction is "Literature" requires several mutually-exclusive definitions of "Literature", so far as most examples of science fiction are concerned. Many who think science fiction *ought* to be "Literature" display serious contradictions to this expressed desire when anyone takes them at their word, and shows through analysis why certain of their favor-

ite stories must be disqualified. A hearty second to your wish that the artificial categorization of fiction into "SF, mystery, western, love", etc. could be dispensed with, so far as presenting material to the public is concerned. Still, since no librarian can read everything, isn't some such simple classification necessary for filing and indexing purposes?

Although I knew that all librarians would not fit the description cited in the March issue, it is nonetheless a real pleasure to hear one who does not. I have no preconceptions as to whether your kind predominate over the kind described—I only know that there seem to be enough of the kind described to have the effect mentioned upon publishers who design books for libraries.

Thanks for writing; and let me add that these pages are wide open to any other librarians who want to discuss the issue, from any angle.

PS— Having in the past assisted in a library, worked in a hospital and in several CCC camps, I've seen quite a bit of what people read, and doubt that I'd be *surprised* at your revelations. This is by

no means to say that I wouldn't find them interesting!

### FOR DR. WALLACE

Dear R.A.W.L.:

Could I qualify to put in a bit extra on the exchange of sentiments between you and Dr. Wallace? I only teach High School English, but learned my trade via Radcliffe, Harvard, B.U. and U. of M.; so it seems to me that we're on parallel paths, if at different distances.

As an editor, you do well to take all those small points in a serious and constructive way, for details are part of the whole—but so is the overall design—and really, Dr. Wallace would be a mile out of proportion except that he seems to realize this himself, in a dim sort of way. It is a funny thing (both queer and comical funny) how people seem to dim the intellectual headlights if anyone tells them their use of language is incorrect. One doesn't have to be an authority of any kind to get away with this. All it takes is a loud voice, a positive manner, a retentive memory and a wizened imagination. A thick ear is a help there, too.

You know that old story that you can hypnotize a hen by placing its beak on a chalk line and there it stays—thinks it's tied? (Someday I

plan to try this, but the hens one meets in supermarkets are beyond that)—At any rate, that's a nice parallel for what happens with some usages—you can tie a lot of people's beaks with them.

Take those non-sibilant hisses. A whisper is hissy whether or not there are s's in it; but so much fun was had with the idea that there had to be an s in any remark so described, that an artificial "error" was created. It is now avoided by not having characters hiss anything. That, of course, is not all loss. They sound more honest, like, speaking right out.

See? I'm getting dragged into those frivolous little twiddles myself. Sure, give them a reasonable amount of attention. But for ghusake, man, just REASONABLE.

Why, some of those cases cited by friend Wallace are not even correct. Textbook editions keep digging out and walking around the corpses of "errors" that were killed off by competent authorities long ago. We should be more wary.

For your information, in case you are curious, there exists a learned society, called the National Council of Teachers of English, who spend much time and thought and professional skill on matters of usage. They get out

monographs every so often—the New York Public Library has them, or the Columbia Library, or you can stock them at little cost for office handbooks. However, their best use is the picture you would get from skimming them: namely, that establishing what expressions are good usage is a chore and a half! If this country has experts, those are the people—yet they have come out backing many a so-called “error” as good usage, after lengthy study and perhaps some hair pulling. In general, they are getting more and more cautious about what they will call wrong.

To give you one good example, consider the “error” of ending a sentence with a preposition. Whoever started this, and whoever takes it seriously, is indeed a grammatical ignoramus, for the preposition is in its function a connective and invariably introduces a substantive. If it has no object, it is not, in that sentence, a preposition at all. Many words are used sometimes as prepositions, sometimes as adverbs. Here is an example: “What goes up does not necessarily come down, though a space ship might go up one side of the galaxy and down the other.” In the first half of that sentence, up and down are used

as adverbs—in the latter half, they are used as prepositions introducing substantives. Both uses are common and never mishandled, which makes the schoolboy’s troubles with this particular purism an especially pathetic matter.

You will notice that I am shirking controversy with any of the points brought up by Dr. Wallace which I claim to be wrong. Instead, I suggest that the light of common sense be shed on all, and then see what appears.

If you feel any further interest, I’ll favor you with some views held by the NCTE and myself for another, on the general subject of “rules” made by academies for the “improvement” and “regulation” of language. However, if a one-word description will save time, the word is peeceooo. (Derived from dead, rotten, and stirred frequently.)

Anyway, Dr. Wallace is the challenger, not I: and as such he does very ill when he accuses our learned friends, de Camp and Asimov, of illiterate errors without citing chapter and verse. I owe endless thanks to de Camp for extremely literate wit, endlessly (one hopes) repeated in kind, though varied in form as he does it. I am a most captious reader

with a lot of proofreading experience, and consider de Camp an excellent stylist. Nobody is immune to printers' demons, but de Camp seems to inspire typesetters to exceptional respect and care. As for Asimov, our paperback classroom shelf has two ("*Pebble In The Sky*" and "*I, Robot*") authority to supplement my choice. Another is coming in soon, since Teen Age Books has listed "*Thousand Year Plan*" as one of their November list. This puts Isaac even here with Dickens, another fine stylist with a real, not tin, ear for language. The selection committee for the Teen Age Book Club includes a past president of NCTE, the professor of library science at Catholic University, and others equally weighty. They include about one title in science fiction per list—sixteen titles, issued monthly, and sold at price advantages in attractive paper covers to take the curse out of Book Reports and replace it with blessings. These books have to be approved by representative teen-age committees, too—but unless it is exceptional—the kids never see a book to vote on it. Consistently, the elders comment on Isaac's work as excellently styled, second to none and better than most. Of course—and

here is where science fiction has some of its troubles—it is labelled "mature". Only our brighter kids take an interest in it—the others go for dog, sports and Western stories, if boys, and Sue Barton if girls.

Kid fans often look, naturally, immature; and for that matter, some science fiction is dreadful drivel. None the less, it is a field with much room for good wit, and the reason I read it is that a good science fiction piece is so gosh darned good. One can find illiterate junk anywhere—surely a person who classifies a whole type (as illiterate) cannot be a very critical or literate observer. Science fiction, like poetry, forms its own patterns. In any case, it's never the medium, but always the artist, that makes the difference.

Naturally, I enjoyed Dr. Wallace's remarks hugely and am all in favor of more and cleaner proofreading. But that's because I'm a specialist in language. Thus, things are grist to my mill which don't justify attention from most others—that is also true of editors. Intelligent laymen are also entitled to their views, as long as they don't try to stuff the ballot box—anyone who uses language has his vote. But it's

community property that's voted on.

Among the intelligent laymen who have added much to the scope and beauty of our language, as currently used, engineers as a class have made innumerable contributions. I suppose that's because their work brings them into contact with so many new inventions and methods before they reach the general public. If their new word is well, chosen, the public accepts it with the thing itself; if not, a better one develops. "Shake", as a term signifying ".8 of a microsecond" sounds to me like a good strong entry. We do that sort of thing with common words all the time, when the context is so specific that the analogy helps to establish the intended meaning without further explanation. It's a fine system. Works.

*English Teacher,*  
Fort Kent, Maine

My apologies, good Pedagogue, for omitting your name, but the following page of your letter is missing. At this stage, after several months of intermittent search, I cannot recall whether (a) it contained nothing of importance except your name (b) it contained nothing of importance except your name, and you requested that

this be with-held, anyway (c) your essay continues. Wouldst forgive my fumble and write again? I *would* like to hear more. The offense will not be repeated.

The following two letters, addressed to *Science Fiction Quarterly* are too interesting to by-pass.

### SPECIAL POLICY?

Dear Rawl!

Too much of the February SFQ is worthy of comment for it to be quickly replaced in the files after reading. The major item is the change of format. This I heartily approve of, and tho I don't have any more ease in handling and reading than I used to, the extra thin paper will be a great asset to your artwork. Many have been the times that you have printed intricate Emsh, Freas, and Orban drawings which were certainly worthy of the best reproduction possible but were mutilated by the botchy printing as a result of the soft, porous, pulp paper. There has been, needless to say, a great improvement from this standpoint.

This change to thinner paper reminds me more than anything else of the now defunct *Startling* which was

printed on this same type of paper. What comes to mind when I think of those beautiful latter-day *Startlings* are the magnificent illustrations by Virgil Finlay which oft-time covered two pages in an absolutely beautiful intricately detailed drawing of which no artist that I know of could even attempt to duplicate. Now that you have the printing facilities for such detailed artwork I'm sure you must have gathered by now what I am getting at... SFQ, with this current change in format, is a combination of the many folded pulp magazines that were at such a peak several years back; only one thing is missing in SFQ that was in such profusion in the old pulps, and that, of course, is Virgil Finlay, the ultimate in pen & ink artists. I beseech you, persuade the Inimitable Finlay to draw something for you.

Emsh, once more, is at his very poorest with this cover, as a result of a sparse variety of colors and the white background, which I still contend is in bad taste. Is this your idea or the artist's? Whoever's it may be, I deplore the idea with a great passion, and do wish you would 1) have your artists completely fill in their paintings, and 2) have a little more variety in your cover artists; give Emsh a

break... Freas and Finlay can paint, too, you know.

Gunn's contention that the plot of "love-and-death" will not a truly science fiction story make, seems to me to be unfounded. For an example of love-and-death in *good, true* science fiction, turn to any Heinlein novel, novelet, or what-have-you. That's what makes Heinlein's fiction so unique in itself...it deals with love-and-death, it deals with it in a science fiction setting, it combines the two and comes up with superior science fiction. Ray Bradbury, my favorite by the way, also works the love-and-death theme successfully. However, I concede that he is actually on the borderline of fantasy and oft-times slips over that border; BUT, no one to my knowledge considers the writings of Heinlein anything *but* science fiction, and similarly, no one can truthfully say that he does not place love-and-death before anything else.

I have heard some favorable and not too favorable reports of Bob Silverberg's first two novels, none of which said that the two were anything out of the ordinary. Even tho I've not read these novels, I could safely guess that "We, the Marauders..." out-does them in every way possible, as I can find hardly a thing



wrong with it. Bob's characterization has a few kinks in it (The "second-level" men were identifiable by name only, though they all took part in a good deal of the novel.) but the writing is of the best I've read by him, and the plot construction and motivation was certainly without flaw. It's *good*...the best I've read in SFQ.

By the way, here's another thing that is reminiscent of the old pulps which, to my knowledge, you have not featured for a great while—three full-page illustrations closely grouped together at the beginning of the novel.

The other stories were of typical SFQ quality, with the exception of "Kangaroo Court" which, to me, was a little vague in the ending. What seems so odd to me is, why SFQ appeals to me so much more than SFS and *Future*. I know that the pulp format is greatly superior to the digest size of the other two, but it would seem to me that, if all were under the same editor, the quality of the fiction would be of the same standard in all three zines, but they're *not*, for some inexplicable reason. I actually find myself enjoying SFQ 100% more than the others (even tho the others are quite good in themselves). Is it that I am under the false

impression that the fiction is of a more enjoyable quality because of the pulp format alone or do you classify your fiction, so that, say, the stories with the more action go in SFQ, the better of the sociological go in SFS, and the remainder of the two in *Future*? Or do you just throw a story in where it will fit? This has me puzzled.

Richard Brown and I have a gay time calling each other names in personal correspondence and in fanzines, but—it's a funny thing—I never can seem to find anything that we disagree on that has to do with the professional side of science fiction, except, however, Harlan Ellison, who he adores with a sickening passion. We could never feud about this in your columns, tho, because, good editor as you are, you don't feature Ellison work in your pages. Therefore, as much as I hate to say it, I'm afraid I nominate Brown for the best letter of this issue...it's not that I'm too modest to vote for myself; I just didn't care much for my letter this time. At any rate, I'm certainly glad to see that you're awarding interior illos. With this fact publicized, you should get a great many more letters than you're getting at the moment.

I don't know how I got

into this business about ESP in Mr. Fritsch's epistle as, to my knowledge, I've not made mention of the subject in the pages of SFQ. Nevertheless, I might enter the fray at that with a few wise words directed to Mr. Fritsch. In the first place, psi as a *fact*, as with flying saucers, has no place in a science *fiction* magazine. Fiction has been written about the two subjects in great profusion and just as much will probably be written in the future—and I don't mind it a bit so long as it is of reasonable necessity to the story. As for "believing" in the subject... I'm afraid not, until I have a good deal more evidence and downright *proof* than I have now. It's a good subject to write fiction about, but it's nothing to consider as factual until there has been more experimentation with it. Just as when some buffoon walks up to you and says: "Do you believe in that crazy science fiction?" There's no "believing" to it—it's nothing but reading entertainment. Who says that the science fiction reader *believes* that there are men on Mars, numerous squadrons of flying saucers based on the moon, people living within the earth, etc. It's great fun speculating but, as a great many people fail to realize,

the stern *believing* of a subject which has not yet proven to be a fact is for people who attend seances and buy *Fate*.

Although the subject Victor Waage exploits is an exceedingly interesting one, I'm afraid I'm a bit too unfamiliar with it to carry on a controversy. I'm looking forward to other letters, however, dealing with the subject.

Well, that covers everything but the story preferences: 1) We. The Marauders (Silverberg) An "A" story. 2) Chip on the Shoulder (Fontenay). 3) The Low and the Mighty (Garrett). 4) Mating Call (Farrell). 5) Kangaroo Court (Maneikis).

Bill Meyers,

4301 Shawnee Circle,  
Chattanooga 11, Tenn.

The "white background" policy on covers came from Above, and artists did as well as they could with it. In numerous instances, I think they did very well, and this particular cover received as many favorable as unfavorable comments.

At one time, I did try to have a particular slant for each of the three titles, *Future*, *Science Fiction Quarterly*, and *Science Fiction Stories*, but some years back I found that it just could not be maintained—and shifted to the policy of

using the best material available to me for the particular issue being made up. So your comment about the difference in tone and content between SFQ and the other two titles is somewhat bewildering. (Although, when SFQ had more pages, longer novelets were often put aside for it.)

### JUSTICE, MY LADY, JUSTICE...

Dear RAWL:

You have no idea what a pleasure it is to find SFQ on the stands; I bought a copy even though I had recently sent some money for subscriptions. Here seems to be a last stand of writing that does not take itself so all-fired seriously as to fall over its own feats. Of course, it only seems so; there are lots of others; but there is something comfortable about the roomier format and the way you stick to the old, garish, outrageous cover pictures, so we can have something to complain about. I also enjoy

your editorials very much; you seem to say about what I would, but from another area of information. This certainly doesn't mean that I always agree, because different data sets can lead to very different conclusions—but what you say is always very understandable congenial and interesting. I was amazed and amused that Jimmy Gunn could manage to sound so intelligent and correct and come out so different. However, I find I agree with your position as elucidated, and that's what I thought you meant the first time—unless there's a third viewpoint un-awares. That certainly does happen.

One thing though: I now regard the letter section with a good deal of nervous apprehension. One feels inspired to comment, and later wonders what on earth made that seem so funny then. Believe me, I'm not competing in any popularity contest. By now Emsh may be making effigies  
*[turn page]*



## The Reckoning



Early returns on the June issue, show the Theodore Thomas novelet, "The Sound of the Wind in a close race with part two of "The Tower" of Zanid". We'll have the finals for you in our next issue.

of me and sticking in pins, but that'll do no harm since he can't draw people correctly, anyway. Look at those Gannies in the Silverberg novelet. Well, it's not so bad as usual. In the first drawing they are at least all standing up and not about to fall down; and as for that silly bellyband outfit, the author certainly did say they wore a single garment of woven cloth around their "middles". It takes a quaint mind, apparently, to get so literal as to leave the poor creatures' bottoms out, but it is not an absolute booboo until one pauses to reflect that these Gannies are also represented by the author as intelligent. Now what intelligent person—this has nothing to do with modesty, just common sense, surely—having only one garment, is not going to wrap it where it will do some good when sitting on a cold rock? But the real scandal is where the author gives them six fingers, the artist five, and if those are stubby as described, we have two different ideas. Author says almost no neck; artist awards them plenty and draws them thin to make them look longer. This is simply not respectable illustration. Besides, the other scene is more true to form. The poor Gannies are tumbling all over the place and

all the figures have what I have come to call the Emsh Effect—the positions that would result from a swift kick all around just before the depicted event; and a sort of expression as if the poor devils were used to it.

Maybe he doesn't hate science fiction stories exactly, just the words? He is a good illustrator in many ways. He gets very good variety and sensitivity of color, movement, and detail without any sense of being limited by the medium-black printer's ink and nothing more, reproduced on coarse paper. One can also see that he is a good student of Edd Cartier illustrations, and who can call this anything but right-minded. But he really should read with greater care and use his own brains more. Now for example, the Cartier-designed helmets on page 77, illustrating "The Low and The Mighty", are very bad design for the conditions of the story, which specify, emphatically, uncomfortable heat, 134°, and a glaring sun. Even on Earth, people shelter the back of the neck under conditions far less trying. Cartier designed those helmets to give off an all-over force field, as any fanchild would know, whereas the specifications in this story are for an air-conditioned suit with "transparent

helmets that partially covered their heads" so far so good, but "leaving their faces bare, protected only by the curtain of chilling air that swept down from the forepiece of the helmet itself." Now, from the location of the girl's helmet's forepiece, all it could put out would be a needlejet aimed straight up and/or out; and as for the man, all he has is earphones.

Emsh does good consistent costume drawing, gadgetry, and backgrounds, and he would be an excellent illustrator if he could only read. Have you thought of giving him lessons?

If you are at all interested in my captious opinions about the stories, I liked "Chip on the Shoulder" best, because the author seemed to have the most fun writing it. The short stories were next, in no particular order, and Silverberg's "We, the Marauders" least because that was the least fun to read. He is forever setting up some highly-organized lot of baddies, and then in the payoff they knock over like duckpins. Just walk into the stronghold and walk out again, and the masterminds turn around and act like utter idiots. He just loves this plot. It's an okay plot, and he can write nothing else for the rest of his life and

turn out every one within the classification "good literature" (whatever that is) (let's say as far as the average critic is likely to rate it) but there is a big IF about that. Well, I thought this one came out dull and laborious. The hero is a punk; the villains are all punks; and the Gannies are more punks—worthy perhaps, but who knows what for sure?—helpless anyway. The hero does not trust his wife and therefore he spills all kinds of confidential information to her. She does not respect him and who could? Certainly not the reader.

Such a story may treat of love and death in some way or other, as you seemed to be saying if I read you aright, but... Gee. All those muddy confusions and overworked illusions and unreasonable conclusions. What can those do in a world already too much inclined thataway? This is not only not art—it just isn't entertainment or anything, but just bad science fiction at its next-to-worst. The boy has good style and a pervasively likable personality in spite of all, otherwise this would not be preferable to the worst piece of hack you can lay your hands on, and pick your own vintage.

*Alma Hill,*  
14 Pleasant Street,  
Fort Kent, Maine

Lay that pistol down, Lady! Or, at least, swerve its horrid maw from the innocent! Ed Emsch can most certainly read—when he's given the opportunity to do so.

Justice demands that a dark and ghastly secret of the publishing world be revealed. In answer to the often-asked question, "Don't the artists *read* the stories", I must now inform you that they are rarely given the opportunity.

Time, time, time, and the deadline. The editor shambles through mazes of mss.—and after reading, or trying to read, dozens of unbelievably bad and hopeless attempts, finally comes up with a collection of words which ought to fill an issue. By this time, a story which you, gentle reader, consider punk looks pretty good by comparison; a story which you think is just fair looks very good. One has to experience the worse to appreciate the bad, as the saying goes. Not that the editor knowingly and deliberately picks bad stories; he thinks they're good at the time, and some much better than just good. Now and then—joy!—he comes across an outstandingly good one.

It is now ten minutes to

deadline. Well, not as bad as that, but it seems that way. The stories get copy-edited, layouts prepared, and off goes the works with a prayer to the printers. Somewhere in the process, the editor has taken notes for the artist. Sometimes, it turns out that the notes were mental, only. Off to the typewriter, while a few impressions still remain—let's see, what *were* the aliens like in "We, The Marauders"? Ed is sure to ask all kinds of questions about them.

This doesn't (time out for general thanksgiving) happen every time. Sometimes, a detailed description can be typed out with the mss. right at hand. Sometimes (you can't lose all the time) the artist shows up, or can be implored to show up, in time for him to glance over a page or two of the story. And *sometimes* there's time for him to read the whole thing, or at least enough of it to get all necessary details.

On the whole, Emsch and his colleagues do a very creditable job. None of them are perfect; at times, when I've been able to let an artist read a story, then discussed it with him, the results have been nowhere as near satisfactory, with respect to verisimilitude to the mss.

as when I just told him, or typed out quotes for him.

And every year, I think to myself, think I, "Hah—maybe this year I can get far enough ahead so that the stories can be set up in type, and a set of galleys sent out to the artists."

End of confession. You may fire when ready, Alma!

PS— My word—I just noticed your address! Are you

the "English Teacher" above?

PPS— Alas, my faults have not been completely enumerated. Just came across a letter from "Cyncial Reader", under some old cover sketches, accepting your bet—or rather, accepting your taking of his challenge. It's an amusing letter, and I'll run it in the next issue—no time to re-type it (he *would* use both sides of the sheet!) at present. RAWL

## Refinement

(continued from page 5)

huh? Well that's nonsense? What about gray and shades of gray? What about all the colors between black and white?"

Trouble is, a lot of people think that the proposition, "A thing is either black or white"

represents an example of the *general formula* for two-valued propositions. It doesn't; what you have there is a special case.

The "black or white" propo-

[turn page]

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sition might be expressed, "X equals a or b"; but the general formula can be expressed, "X equals a or not-a". We examine "X"—but before we do that, we have to agree among ourselves on some crucial matters. "A thing is either black or not-black." Very well—which "thing"; what degree of "is-ness"; what do we mean by "black" in this instance? Then, and only then, do we turn to a process of examination—it must be one which we all agree to be valid—and come up with a verdict. The answer must be "yes" or "no", because the question has become, "Is this 'thing' to be considered 'black' according to the manner in which we have agreed to call 'things' black?"

**T**OO OFTEN, however, examination has not taken place, has been cursory, or *it has been taken for granted* that "everyone knew" what "thing", "black", and "is" meant in this reference without testing the areas of agreement, before examination.

If we decide, for example, that we mean "blending of all the colors" when we say "black" in a given instance,

then something which *looks black* may be only approximately so. A valid examination requires instruments to detect if *all colors* are really there; if any are missing, then the "thing" is "not-black", however black it may look to us.

And a "not-black" verdict, after the examination, does not establish the color of the "thing"; it only eliminates *one* possibility. The process has to be repeated—agreement upon what we mean by each separate color, or tone, or blend of colors, before examination. Each test (up to the one which give a positive verdict) eliminates another color, or tone, or combination, telling us not what color the "thing is" but what color "the thing is not".

For ordinary purposes, "approximate black" may be good enough; but we must remember that even under such conditions we have not established the color of the "thing" if we find that it is "not approximate black". But then, we may only need to know whether the "blackness" is an accurate description, as in the famous altercation between the pot and the kettle. Most people miss



the point there, too; the question is *not* the color of the pot, but the accuracy of the pot's report. The fact that the pot may be "black" (too) is irrelevant: *is the kettle black? (And is the standard of blackness the same for all parties in this dispute?)*

NO, IS IT just a question of using the "right words". You know—"if we just would use the right words, there wouldn't be any misunderstandings". Now I'll grant that if I arbitrarily decide to call any color except white "black",

then you will be confused when I say, "Cross the street when you see the black light on the bottom." Of course. But even though I'm careful not to use "black" to mean anything you can't find in my dictionary, I can easily mislead you—and prove that I was right. My dictionary may contain definitions that are not in yours. More likely, you will assume that I mean "black" the way *you* would mean "black" in the same context.

And this doesn't even begin to take into account our emotional reactions to the word

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"black"—either every time we hear it, or when we hear it in the particular context—which may force a meaning for you other than the one I was trying to convey. Still, I was using the "right word".

Scientific work requires extensive and minute refinements before a question is formulated; this is generally agreed upon—when and where they haven't been made, you get pseudo-scientific answers at best. You must have this intricate refinement of definitions and standards of accept-

ance or rejection before you can pose the questions, and conduct the examinations, necessary in a technological civilization.

Communication between human beings *needs* this sort of refinement; where it does not exist, or is in sporadic use at best, you got—well, look around you.

Science fiction can assist in refining the definitions, asking the questions, then suggesting possible answers. What are the questions? Just about any question "everyone knows", the answers to. RAWL

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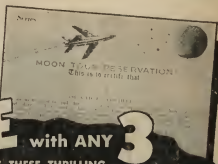
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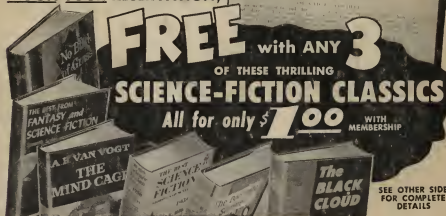
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